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HONORABLE S. H. BLAKE, K.C.

THE REVELATION OF JOHN.

AN EXPOSITION.

BY

P. W. GRANT,

AUTHOR OF "THE BIBLE RECORD OF CREATION TRUE FOR EVERY AGE,"
"THE GREAT MEMORIAL NAME," ETC.

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PREFACE.

THE Revelation of John may be regarded as, to no small extent, an epitome of the entire Scriptures, or a summary of all Revelation. It condenses, and at the same time completes, the whole prophetic history of human Redemption. It need hardly be said, however, that, whilst thus comprehensive, it treats, directly or indirectly, very largely of the great Apostasy elsewhere alluded to in Scripture, or of the rise and reign and fall of a power most hostile and destructive to the cause and kingdom of Jesus Christ. Symbolic from beginning to end, it contains, within the smallest compass, the very greatest amount of redemptive truth. Only as the consecutive representations are rightly interpreted, and their inter-relations seen, can this most marvellous Book, whose complex structure is the very perfection of superhuman art, be at all satisfactorily understood, or be regarded as, to any great extent, even intelligible. As is frequently remarked in this book, the gravest mistakes have been made, and the wildest imaginations formed, through the most common of all the errors into which interpreters have often fallen,—we mean that of confounding the symbol with the thing symbolised. We have, whether successfully or not, at least endeavoured to keep free from this error, through which, we are persuaded, the whole Book has, in some instances, come to be so thoroughly misinterpreted as to lead many to neglect the study of it, if not to deem it beyond the reach of any consistent or even rational interpretation.

INVERAVEN BANK, PERTH,
September 12th, 1889.

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THE REVELATION OF JOHN.

I.

CHAPTER I.

I.—THE SUPERScription.

REV. i. 1-3.

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants the things which must shortly come to pass: and He sent and signified by His angel to His servant John, (who bare witness of the word of God and of the testimony of Jesus Christ,) what things soever he saw. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things which are written therein: for the time is at hand."

1. THESE simple words at once describe and commend the entire Book. Their position and form have suggested the idea of a subsequent writer. For this, however, we have no sufficient reason, critical or historical; whilst through the whole we rather seem to see the image and signature of the aged Apostle John. We may add that, though the general meaning is sufficiently clear, the more exact interpretation and even the proper translation have given rise to considerable diversity of view.

2. "*The Revelation of Jesus Christ.*" Some would prefer, "The Apocalypse," or, "The Unveiling of Jesus Christ," as if directly pointing to His Second Advent as the grand theme of the Book. Others, again, take the expression objectively of Christ Himself. However, the words which follow, "which God gave Him," etc., decisively prove that Jesus is to be regarded as the Author, or rather the Medium, of the Revelation.

3. "*Which God gave Him,*"—words somewhat strange, as implying subordination, yet most significant and in perfect keeping with the express declarations of Christ, and with all we know of His mediatorial Person and work. Nor does this appear more

clearly than in the Gospel of John, unless we except one remarkable passage in that of Matthew, where, in most comprehensive terms, and for the highest practical purpose, Christ Himself sets forth His mediatorial subordination in a form which assuredly implies His own personal Divinity,—chap. xi. 27, 28: “All things have been delivered unto Me of My Father: and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any one know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal (Him).” Hence what follows, “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,” etc. So, according to Paul, this mediatorial subordination obtains in heaven, and will continue to do so for ever, 1 Cor. xv. 24, 28, “Then (cometh) the end, when He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power. . . . And when all things have been subjected unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subjected to Him that subjected all things unto Him, that God may be all in all.”

4. “*To show His servants the things which must shortly come to pass.*” Here all Christians without restriction are intended, and not any one favoured class, as that of apostles, prophets, preachers, and the like. This is evident from the very nature of the announcement itself, and from the fact that the entire prophecy was to be sent to the seven churches, and thus to the whole Church of God. Christ would instruct His people with respect, not to coming events in general, as if to gratify curiosity or to demonstrate His own prophetic powers, but to certain things which could not but come to pass, and that because of their relation to His mediatorial kingdom.

All this is simple; but what shall we say of these things as here expressly said to be at hand, whilst some, nay, the most important of them, seem, after these eighteen centuries, so very far distant still? This clause, with its adverbial expression, “with speed,” “quickly,” or “shortly,” belongs to a class of announcements, whose real meaning it is by no means easy to determine, yet to which there must be some fit and available key. Some, indeed, would simply regard the whole as indicating an imperfect knowledge, if not a mistaken idea, with respect to the date of the Second Coming of Christ. His own words, relating to two distinct comings, the one near and the other remote, the former a type of the latter, the earlier for the judgment of the Jewish nation and the later for that of the world, and apparently setting forth the two as if one and the same coming, not un-

naturally, led the Apostles to think and speak as if there were but one, and that as near or at hand. The dispersion of the Jews at once so far fulfilled the words of Jesus, and made their further and more important reference to His final coming more simple and clear to the minds of His disciples. Still, we may freely admit that the great distance of this Advent was by no means apprehended in Apostolic times, as, indeed, it rarely has been up to the present age. However, we do not mean to seek in any limited knowledge or mistaken view the real key in question.

The Apostle Peter would seem directly to hand it to us. When expressly treating of this very matter, and instructing Christians as to how they should deal with the question of the "mockers" of "the last days"—"Where is the promise of His coming?"—he says (2 Epist. iii. 8): "Forget not this one thing, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." In the first instance, this implies a confession of entire ignorance as to the time referred to; in the second, they are not to measure Divine by human time. What is long to man is short to God. Between the past and future eternity, the intervening time is but as a passing moment. Thus viewed by the eye of Jesus, or even by our own, how short the whole history of man upon earth, let the symbolical Millennium stretch out as far as any interpretation may carry it!

It has, however, been argued, that we cannot suppose Christ or His inspired disciples to have used words in one sense, whilst their hearers or readers could not but understand them in another. Still, we know that His words were often misunderstood, either because incomprehensible at the time, or because taken literally whilst used in a metaphorical or symbolical sense. Nor can we object to this, seeing He spoke for all time, and in a way to be rightly understood in due season. Here, however, Peter does not so speak. As already said, his words imply a confession of ignorance on his part, and suggest a profession of ignorance on the part of those who would wisely deal with the "mockers" of all times; as if he said, The coming of Christ is in Scripture declared to be near, and it must be so, yet in a Divine and not a human sense, near in the view of Him to whom "one day," etc., and so possibly very far off to us to whom a single year or day may appear long. This view at least so far removes our difficulty.

There is another, entirely different from it, and yet which we might rather treat as supplementary to it—namely, that which regards the things referred to as forming one grand and long-

continued series, the beginning of which is thus declared to be at hand. Taken by itself, this cannot well be maintained, as the whole series is evidently intended. Still, if we take the words in the Divine sense, as above, the entire series may seem to stretch out into the far-distant future, whilst the beginning may be quite at hand. And this would be true of all readers of this wonderful Book age after age, as it continued to unfold the long series of events, and as it thus ever pointed to what would "shortly come to pass." Against all this it might indeed be said, that, if we take the words in the Divine sense, we cannot be assured of even the beginning, any more than the end, being in the human or ordinary sense near or at hand. This is certainly correct, and would suffice to set aside this view, unless we can find sufficient reason for regarding at least the beginning of the series as thus literally near. Now, such reason we actually have. After John had received this entire revelation, it was said to him, chap. xxii. 10, "Seal not up the words of the prophecy of this Book: for the time is near (or at hand)";—clearly implying that the Book could be at least so far understood because the time of at least partial fulfilment, and therefore of the beginning of the series, was near to the reader, or actually at hand.

All this, however, fails to meet the whole facts of the case. It fails to give full force to the reiterated expression, "Behold, I come quickly." It does not account for the fact that Jesus counsels all His followers to watch and to expect His coming, as if it might be, nay, actually would be in their own day, or to all of them without exception. We thus say "actually" and "to all," because it seems to be usually supposed, that Christ did not mean that all of every age were bound to believe that He could not but come to them, but simply meant, that the end of the age might possibly be in their day, and that therefore they ought to be ready, whether He actually came to them or not. Than this, could anything be more unlike the real teaching of Jesus Christ? Had He so intended, the desired key would, we suspect, never be found. Why tell His disciples to watch for what He well knew to be so remote? Nay, why tell them to watch daily for what He led them clearly to know could not take place for at least some very considerable time, during which the Gospel was to be preached, not to the Jews only, but to all nations?

So in the like instance of the words of the Apostle Paul. To the Thessalonians, excited with the thought of the speedy coming of Jesus, he wrote, assuring them that a great falling away or

Apostasy must first take place ; and thus rendering it impossible for some time, at least, to watch daily for the coming to which he directly referred. So, too, the earlier students of the Apocalypse could not, for a like reason, daily expect this final coming. No Apostle, however, could or would make void the counsel of Jesus, who, when He said " Watch," pointed to a reality, and not to a bare possibility, or rather, when an intervening period was revealed, to an impossibility. In the parable of the Ten Virgins, to whom the kingdom of heaven is to be likened, it is clearly indicated that the King would come to all without exception. Now, this kingdom must be held to include people of all generations, and not those only of that generation to which He would openly and finally come. We must, therefore, if we would interpret the words of Christ aright, or if we would solve the difficulty in question, find out some principle according to which His real coming must be regarded as perpetual or continuous, no less than final,—in other words, according to which He is to be viewed as the Ever-coming One, who shall come at last.

Our meaning may be more easily seen if we remember that Christ, in addressing His immediate disciples, spoke, and that most suitably, to those of all future generations,—in fact, as He would have spoken, if all had formed but one co-existing multitude, one and only one generation. Let us suppose this to have been not only ideally, but literally the case ; and then His coming would have been also literally near or at hand. As to the time, the year, or day, or hour, all would be ignorant, and might therefore be counselled to watch and to be prepared. Before He openly appeared, many might die ; and for them He would be justly said to have come,—come really, though invisibly. But, as some would be passing away every day, every hour, nay, every moment, He would thus be viewed as continuously or perpetually coming. Every individual would see the propriety of His counsel, " Be thou also ready ; for thou knowest not when the Son of man cometh." His words would be seen to have a double reference,—the one to His final coming to the collective body of His disciples, and the other to His countless intermediate comings to the individual disciples of every age but the last. The facts, that He came for the same end, the judgment of all, and that the time between death and resurrection, or between His coming to the individual and His coming to the collective body, would in no case affect that judgment, would make His whole continuous comings virtually, though not visibly, one and the same grand

coming; and all would feel that His words were directly and fitly addressed to them, and, as such, had a clear and simple meaning. Now let us turn to the actual case. Jesus sees before Him, as one grand whole, all the successive generations of mankind; He knows that all are to have a like short and uncertain period of "merciful visitation"; He knows that they will be treated according as that period is employed, and not at all according to aught done between their death and resurrection; and, whilst using words which can find their full meaning only in His final judicial advent, He so applies them to all of every age, that they cannot be possibly understood, unless regarded as having a sure and certain reference to His coming to every nominal Christian of every age, and thus as forming one grand coming, and setting Him forth, as we have said, as the Ever-coming One who shall come at last.

5. "*And He sent and signified by His angel to His servant John . . . what things soever he saw.*" The verb here rendered "signified" has not unnaturally suggested the idea of revealing or showing forth by such signs or symbols as we find employed throughout the whole Book; nor could any verb be more fitly chosen for such a purpose. This will be clearly seen, if, as above, we treat the clause relating to John as virtually parenthetical, and thus bring the verb into closer connection with what we deem its real object,—"*signified to John what things soever he saw.*" This clause, by widely separating them, has obscured this connection, and so led to the introduction of more than one needless supplement into both the Authorised and Revised Versions, and thus, we are assured, to a misunderstanding of the entire meaning. We need to supply neither "it," as the object of the verb, nor "even," by which the Revisers have erroneously made the words which follow exegetical of those which precede it, and thus identified the things which John is here said to have seen with "the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus," of which he is said to have borne witness. For this identity Alford has strongly, but unsuccessfully, contended, as we shall immediately see. All will appear simple, if we literally render thus:—"And, having sent by His angel to His servant John, He signified" (or set forth by signs and symbols) "*what things soever he saw.*" Alford has well observed that "no word need be supplied, as *τὴν ἀποκάλυψιν*, the verb being used absolutely after the manner of the Hebrew, (*וַיִּגְלוֹת בִּיד*) of Ex. iv. 13."

6. “(*Who bare witness of the Word of God and of the testimony of Jesus Christ.*”) For more than one reason we have treated this as a parenthesis. The verse will read well without it; whilst, thus introduced, it is fitted to point to the apostolic authorship of this Book. Only one John could have been so described. Here we have no special allusion, as some have supposed, to either the Gospel or the Epistles of John, but rather a direct affirmation of his general work as an Apostle and appointed witness of the Faithful and True Witness. Others joined with him in maintaining and suffering for this word and testimony, but he alone is said to bear witness of it. The fine expressive words are used again and again in this Book, and that in a way which, as we have hinted, fully proves that they are not here used, as the Revisers, Alford, and others suggest, of the things which John is said to have seen, that is, virtually the Apocalypse itself. Thus in this very chapter, ver. 9, we have, “I, John, . . . partaker with you in tribulation, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus,”—evidently as persecuted for his work, and not in order to receive this revelation. So, in chap. vi. 9, the faithful martyrs are described as those “that had been slain for the Word of God and the testimony which they held.” Again, in chap. xii. 17, we have virtually the same,—“her seed, that keep the commandments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus.” So, chap. xiv. 12, “they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.” Once more, chap. xix. 10, “I am a fellow-servant with thee and with the brethren that hold the testimony of Jesus.” The whole usage of this Book seems conclusive against the application of the words before us to the Book itself, or to aught but the general testimony of John here, as they are to the like general profession of Christians elsewhere.

7. “*Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things which are written therein.*” Thus is this most wonderful, complex, and mysterious Book commended to all Christians; almost the same words are used in chap. xxii. 7, “Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this Book”; and then we find, vers. 18 and 19, the most solemn warning given as to the treatment of it,—“I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this Book, If any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this Book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the Book of this prophecy, God

shall take away his part from the Tree of Life, and out of the Holy City and the things written in this Book." Here it might be well said, that the writer must have been perfectly sure of the Divine origin of this revelation, including the fact of his own undoubted inspiration, or that he was guilty of the most daring presumption with which any uninspired man can be chargeable. Why so exalt any merely human production as to affirm that all men must accept the whole and alter no part whatever, nay, must treat all as a direct communication from Heaven, and that for the most sacred end, at the peril of the very loss of eternal salvation, unless the author knew that such was the express judgment of God?

We need not say how often this Book has been treated with contempt, or by how many its Divine origin has been doubted or denied. Nor has it always been read in the public assemblies of Christians, as the words here employed suggest that it would and ought to be. The need of such serious warning seems thus to have been foreseen. Doubtless this writing of John, like the writings of Paul, contains "many things hard to be understood," and as, we may say, do all the words and works of God. Nor could it be otherwise. Nor would these words or works long interest the human mind, or be long regarded as Divine, if they did not. Nor are we the less earnestly and reverently to study either because of darkness or difficulty; nor are we, in either case, to cease to study and to endeavour to explain, because many able and learned men may differ as to the divinely-intended meaning, or may have as yet failed to give a full and satisfactory exposition of the scientific or the spiritual truth embodied. It may be said, and it has often been said, that it is vain to attempt to expound this Book, as every attempt has hitherto failed. However, it is very far from true that all such endeavours have been of no avail; they have tended to prepare the way for an ultimate, full, and satisfactory exposition. Very great progress has already been made. Even in upholding conflicting theories, different authors have been contributing to the final and harmonious result.

Be it observed, it is not said, Blessed is he that understandeth this Book, as if the blessing would be his only who succeeded in mastering its intricate and mysterious contents. The blessing will be his who seeks to know its meaning, and to make the proper use of what he does understand, or of what is really within his reach; and, we are persuaded, there is greatly more within the reach of all sincere Christian readers than many seem to think. Besides, the full understanding of this Book is by no means

necessary in order to very great benefit on the part of the devout and thoughtful Christian. We may say, that it contains very much of what may be found elsewhere in Scripture—nay, that, to a wonderful extent, it contains the sum and substance of the entire Scriptures, and might be freely, if not exactly, called a summary of them; so that, with the aid of these, all that is of essential importance and of highest influence may be learned and appreciated. We might show that this Book, instead of being a mere prophetic and most puzzling enigma, as some have treated it, is in a high sense one of the most practically useful of the Books of Scripture. To some this will appear absurd. It is the contrary.

The study of this Book will place before our minds the truth which it contains with respect to God, to Christ, to heaven, to Christian character and work, to the great warfare of life, and of truth and error in the history of the Church, to death and immortality, in a way fitted to interest, to elevate, and to inspire, as we can find nowhere else. As, too, we read this Book with devout meditation, we shall inhale its pure, life-giving, and life-sustaining spirit,—the very spirit of God, of Christ, and of heaven. We are too apt to overlook this special and most precious function of Scripture in general, and of this Book in particular. We are apt to think merely of doctrines, precepts, promises, and to forget that the whole sacred volume is like a spiritual world, with varied spiritual regions, through all of which circles one and the same spiritual atmosphere, to breathe which is essential to all spiritual life, and yet which, like our own material atmosphere, seems different in different places. If we read and ponder the Psalms we inhale one kind of spirit; if we read the old Prophets we may breathe a different spirit, or, rather, find a modification of the same spirit. So when we read the Gospels or the Epistles; and so, and that most decidedly, when we spiritually visit this Patmos, and converse with the Prophet-Apostle, and contemplate scene after scene, and listen to voice after voice which we ever feel to be those, not of men, but of angels, and of Christ, and of God. The atmosphere, the spirit of this small Book is felt and enjoyed as the atmosphere, the spirit of heaven; and the more we breathe it, the more are we blessed by being made more and more like the inhabitants of this eternal sphere, and feel that we are becoming increasingly fit to join them, and to be for ever with the Lord.

Further, we shall be most truly blessed, if we really “keep the words of this prophecy,”—if we hear and follow “what the Spirit

says unto the Churches"; if we follow the precepts and accept the promises most impressively put before our minds; and if we follow the example of "the noble army of martyrs" made to pass before our view, and who loved their Saviour-King more than life or any earthly thing. And, is it not true that this very Book has lent a superhuman courage to many a martyr, and given the richest consolation to many a desponding Christian, and awakened to new life many a lukewarm spirit, and roused to energy and ardent service many a drowsy servant and many a flagging soldier of Jesus Christ? This Book is evidently a most important part of the whole volume of inspiration. Who could tell the loss to the Church and the world, if it had never been supplied by the Spirit of all revelation?

8. "*For the time is near (or at hand).*" We have really dealt with this already. We have endeavoured to show, that this is literally true of all of every age without exception, and not of those only to whom Christ shall finally and openly come. We may add that we miss a most important and cheering truth, when we look forward to death as that for which we are to prepare, as if we had all alone, with dreary chilling loneliness, to enter the dark unknown world. Let us fully keep by the idea which Christ Himself set before the minds of His sorrowful disciples, and which we are assuredly to regard as intended for our comfort as well as theirs, when He so finely and so expressly said, that He was going away to prepare a place for them, and that He would return to receive them, doubtless into that prepared place, in heaven and not on earth, seeing He adds, not, "ye shall receive Me, that where ye are I shall be also," as He must have said, if the abode spoken of was this world, but, "and I will receive you unto Myself, that where I am ye may be also," even in heaven, in the place which He was going from this world to prepare for them. Such was the comfort given. He was soon to depart. Let them not be cast down. His absence was necessary. He had to prepare a place for them. The time of separation would soon end. He would come to take them to His and their prepared home. So, we may be assured, it would be with all other disciples. He will soon come for them. Let them not think merely of death. Let them expect His coming, which, though at death, they ought to think of, not as death, but as life and immortality. By so looking for Christ, they will know what the words relating to the New Jerusalem mean, "there shall be no more death."

All this pertaining to the faithful disciple will be seen the more clearly to be correct, if we turn to the other side, and mark what Christ says of the faithless servant, Luke xii. 45, 46, "But if that servant shall say in his heart, My Lord delayeth His coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and the maidservants, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; the Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he expecteth not, and in an hour when he knoweth not, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint his portion with the unfaithful." Here it is clear the coming is to this servant as an individual—nay, a coming to him before the coming for the other servants; and yet it is a coming for judgment, as he must be judged before he can be appointed a place among the faithless. Whatever the general or public judgment, it cannot but coincide with this, and be virtually the same. This case of a faithless servant shows the force of the impressive words, "The Judge standeth before the doors,"—always near, always observing and recording actions good or bad, and ever coming to faithful and faithless alike. Blessed, then, all who keep the sayings of this Book, however hard their lot here, however persecuted by men and apparently forsaken of God: for the time of trial and suffering will soon end; and the Book he will find a true and faithful guide to a blessed and glorious eternity.

II.—*THE ADDRESS.*

REV. i. 4-8.

"John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before His throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the Faithful Witness, the Firstborn of the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth. Unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by His blood, and made us a kingdom, priests unto His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Behold, He cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, who is and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

1. "*John to the seven churches which are in Asia.*" This Apostolic salutation, taken in connection with the injunction of ver. 11, "What thou seest, write in a book, and send to the

seven churches," would lead us to regard the whole Book as an inspired epistle addressed to these Churches in Asia,—not continental Asia, nor even Asia Minor, but only the western and south-western part of the latter, or Roman Proconsular Asia. They were not the only Churches of even that limited region. Why these were selected, or why seven and no more, we may afterwards consider.

The simple use of the name, John, is expressive of the author's consciousness of his own pre-eminent rank and unique position, or of his full assurance that those addressed could not fail to identify him. No other John, whether presbyter, as has been held, or aught else, would dare so to write, if disposed, or even think of so doing, unless for some evil design, namely, that of deception, a design utterly inconsistent with the whole spirit of the Book, and not to be regarded as so much as possible. If this does not prove the Apostolic authorship, it at least lends great force to the manifold evidence in favour of it. We cannot here formally treat of this question. We might have set forth not a few striking points of resemblance between this Book and the Gospel and Epistles of the Apostle John, which all may see to be decidedly evidential. At the same time, we may put by far too much weight on questions of authorship relating to the Books of Scripture. In the case before us, the grand point will be found to be, whether the many and wonderful prophecies have been so fulfilled as to demonstrate the Divine origin of the Book.

2. "*Grace to you and peace.*" A good wish, including all good wishes. Neither Christian nor Christian Church can desire or pray for more. Grace means favour; and what more sweet, more precious, more rich in blessing, than the favour of God? However, we must not turn to our Greek dictionary or to any classical writer to find out the real meaning of the word. We must study our New Testament. It belongs to the peculiar dialect of the heavenly kingdom; and has a variety of shades of meaning. The same holds good of the other unworldly word, Peace. Both point to no mere earthly good. They stand to each other in the relation of cause and effect. The grace of the Father appears in the gift of the Son, and flows through the grace of the Holy Spirit; and leads to the possession of "the peace of God which passeth all understanding."

3. "*From Him who is and who was and who is to come.*" So the Father is here described. John would carry us back to the

Eternal Fountain of human salvation; remind us of "Jehovah the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob," the God and Father of Jesus Christ. Doubtless for a special purpose he was led to present the religion of the New Testament to no small extent in the garb of that of the Old, and to show that, however diverse these religions were in form, they were one and the same in spirit and in truth, and that the diversified types and symbols of the one finely corresponded with the facts and realities of the other. In this way we are taught to study the whole history of Redemption, and to press on towards the knowledge of the perfect and unbroken system of Redemptive Truth. The Apostolic Prophet is to set forth the development of the mightiest forces of moral and spiritual evil, and that in terribly destructive antagonism to the kingdom of Christ; and it was well for him thus to call the loving and merciful Father by His most awful and glorious name, the great self-existing Almighty "I AM THAT I AM," on whom all believers may rely for the final overthrow of evil and the universal and eternal triumph and reign of good.

4. "*And from the seven Spirits which are before His throne.*" Certainly not, as some have strangely supposed, the seven angels said in the Apocrypha to present the prayers of the saints, but assuredly the Holy Spirit, who alone can be associated with Father and Son, as the source of grace and peace, and whose manifold perfection, not so much in being or person as in all His countless operations in the economy of redemption, is, in keeping with the whole manner of this prophecy, mystically indicated by the symbolic number of completeness or perfection. The Holy Spirit is in like form alluded to in chap. iii. 1, "These things saith He that hath the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars;" in chap. iv. 5, "And (there were) seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God;" and in chap. v. 6, "A Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth;" words so far borrowed from Zech. iv. 6, 10, where we are first told of the grand Agent,— "Not by might (or army), nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts," and then this same Agent seems referred to as "those seven: they are the eyes of the Lord which run to and fro through the whole earth." Thus does the Old Testament garb here again appear. Of course the agency of the Holy Spirit is set forth in the Ancient Scriptures

under every variety of figure. Here, however, the mystic form is evidently borrowed from the words just quoted.

Now, we do well to note, *first*, that Jesus is said to have these spirits as He has the seven stars, and therefore in some way engaged in His service; *secondly*, that, in harmony with Zech. iv. 10, these are not only symbolised by the seven eyes of the Lamb, but said to be "sent forth into all the earth," and thus to be employed by Christ in His reign among men; and *thirdly*, that they are here and in chap. v. 6 said to be before the throne of Jehovah, and that as "lamps of fire." Thus variously represented, the one Holy Spirit appears as in some sense subordinate to both Father and Son. In the economy of grace, the Son, as Mediator, is engaged in doing the Father's will, and that will alone. The Father sends: the Son is sent. The Son lays, in His life and death, the foundation of the kingdom of grace, and, ascending to heaven, receives all power to build up and complete that kingdom, emphatically the power of the Holy Spirit. Well, therefore, has that Spirit been mystically represented as before what is elsewhere called "the throne of God and of the Lamb," as if ready to obey the one and undivided will of both, in full keeping with what we find in the Gospel of John, and what has been long and strangely misconceived—namely, that the gracious Spirit is said to proceed from the Father and also from the Son, as is implied in the same statement, John xv. 26, "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, (even) the Spirit of truth which proceedeth (or, goeth forth) from the Father, He shall bear witness of Me." Here Jesus is said to send the Holy Spirit from the Father, as the Father is said, chap. xiv. 26, to send Him in the name of Christ. Thus is He said to proceed or to go forth from both Father and Son, not by any eternal procession, but in His great and continuous work, His constant readiness to do which is here mystically set forth by His position before the throne of the Father and of the Son.

5. "*And from Jesus Christ, (who is) the Faithful Witness, the Firstborn of the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth.*"

(1) "*And from Jesus Christ.*" Here now we have the New Testament name of Him who was so often promised in ancient times, and of whom the Prophets write as if historically recording "what they had seen," as did the Apostles, "with their eyes, and their hands had handled." This name belongs

to the Hebrew Scriptures as really as did the great name Jehovah, or Yahveh, and was first given to the Captain who led Israel to the Promised Land, Joshua, or Jehoshua, or Jehovah-will-save, than which no name could better befit Him to whom it was afterwards given, because He it was "who shall save His people from their sins." We need not say that, as Jesus is the Greek form of Joshua, Christ is the Greek rendering of Messiah, the Anointed, a name given to the kings of Israel, and thus by inheritance, as well as by right, the appropriate name of the true King of the whole Israel of God,—the Israel spoken of throughout this Book. We may repeat, then, that John still uses the garb of the Old Testament.

(2) "*The Faithful Witness.*" Here, as in the descriptive name of the Father, John uses the nominative case where grammarians would expect the genitive. He has done better than they would have taught him; and by treating these descriptive names as indeclinable nouns, he has not only written grammatically, but also done what was best fitted to express the sacredness of the names, and to awaken the reverence due to those so simply, yet so sublimely, named. For the first use of this name, we must go back to the times of the Prophets. Finely has the Evangelical Prophet spoken of the Promised One as a witness,—Isa. lv. 4, "Behold, I have given Him" (the true David) "(for) a Witness to the peoples," (those to be called, ver. 5) "a Leader and Commander to the peoples." Doubtless, however, John here specially alludes to the words of Jesus Himself,—John xviii. 37, "To this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth." Ever faithful on earth, He continues to be ever "the True and Faithful Witness" in heaven. Happy are all they who accept His gracious and unerring testimony!

(3) "*The Firstborn of the dead.*" This title naturally follows the preceding. As just said, His testimony in heaven succeeds His testimony on earth. He was declared to be the Son of God by His resurrection, which is here regarded as a birth; and that in keeping with more than one typical allusion. In 2 Sam. vii. 12-14, Jehovah, in the first announcement of the Davidic covenant of royalty, which implied and pointed to the coming and reign of the true David, uses these words: "I shall set up thy seed after thee, . . . and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son,"—son and heir, son and representative, as this throne is else-

where called "the throne of Jehovah." So in the second Psalm, directly referred to here, it is said, "I will declare the decree : Jehovah hath said to Me, Thou art My Son ; this day have I begotten Thee ;"—words applied to Jesus in the New Testament. Like and still more express words we find in Psalm lxxxix. : " I have made a covenant with My chosen. . . . Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up Thy throne to all generations. . . . He shall cry unto Me, Thou art my Father. . . . I also will make Him (My) firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth. . . . His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and His throne as the days of heaven, . . . as the sun before Me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and (as) the faithful witness in the sky." Hence Paul, Acts xiii. 32, 33, connects the Divine Sonship with the resurrection of Jesus,—“ And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers, how that God hath fulfilled the same . . . in that He raised up Jesus ; as also it is written in the second Psalm, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee.”

Hence, however truly Jesus came into this world to be a King, or to occupy that throne of Jehovah which was typified by the throne of His father David, it was really through His second birth, even His resurrection from the dead, that He became fully entitled to reign as King over His own mediatorial kingdom, the foundation of which He previously laid by His own obedience unto death, as the great Propitiation for the sins of the world. In this way the words before us mean much more than those of 1 Cor. xv. 20, " The firstfruits of them that are asleep," or than what is implied in Rom. viii. 29, " Whom He foreknew, He also foreordained (to be) conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren." Jesus states the truth most sublimely in this very chapter: " Fear not ; I am the First and the Last, and the Living One ; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades ; " or, chap. iii. 7, " He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and none shall shut, and that shutteth, and none openeth,"—in fact, the true David, the eternal King of the true and immortal Israel of God, and specially fitted to be so as " the Firstborn of the dead," not only in virtue of the Great Sacrifice, but also because only as united to one risen from the dead and ascended to heaven, could His subjects feel and enjoy their living connection with the unseen and eternal, or realise the animating idea of the essential unity of

the kingdom of grace on earth and the kingdom of glory in heaven, of which Christ is the one all-present Head.

(4) "*And the Ruler of the kings of the earth.*" Here we prefer "Ruler" to "Prince," as expressive of actual fact, and not of mere right. These kings and their kingdoms are of the earth earthly, ruled, as afterwards said (or shepherded, as some would say), "with a rod of iron." Of course Christ, however opposed, is, by Divine right, "King of kings and Lord of lords"; but here His almighty rule over His enemies, or over all kings and subjects who will not sincerely and loyally obey, is declared. For all His faithful people He has a sceptre of truth and righteousness and love. For the persistently rebellious He has a rod of iron. Here, again, we have an allusion to the second Psalm. Whilst "the Church of the firstborn" can rejoice in Him who is "the Firstborn of the dead," they can, amidst all the commotions and persecutions of the world, put full confidence in Him who is able to control all kings and nations, and to overrule all things for their good. These kings and nations will not always be ruled with the iron rod; but, in the end, when the Gospel has prevailed, they will cheerfully submit to the great King, and loyally and gratefully bring their glory to the "New Jerusalem."

6. Thus has John set forth the grace and peace of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As already said, He would present New Testament truth, not entirely, but to no small extent, in Old Testament costume. His mind was led to grasp the idea of the unity and harmony of all Revealed Truth, and to exhibit, in this wonderful Book, the sum of all Revelation, in all its progressive stages from beginning to end, though rather in the way of occasional allusion than in that of regular order. How much of both Old and New Testament truth has he condensed in this form of benediction! How natural the words which follow!

7. "*Unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by His blood, and made us a kingdom, priests unto His God and Father; to Him (be) the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*"

(1) This ascription of praise is to be specially connected with the second title of Christ, and clearly sets forth His real connection with the dead, and the real character of His death. All blessed with grace and peace trace all to God through Him and His great sacrifice. Their hearts overflow with love and praise. A new song rises from their lips. We think we may, without presumption, call it the Song of the Redeemed,—the song which

none can really sing save the truly redeemed from among men.

(2) "*Unto Him that loveth us.*" Better than "loved us," because of higher textual authority, and because of richer and more delightful meaning, including past, present, future, nay, changeless love. How gentle, how inspiring, how mighty this love of Jesus Christ! How many the hearts drawn by it from earth to heaven! How it has changed the whole history of this world! How it now circles among the nations, and achieves its 'countless victories over selfishness and sin! How, as a Spirit of Life, it enters dead souls, and makes them live for ever to God (and to one another.

(3) "*And loosed us from our sins by His blood*" (or, Authorised Version, "*Washed us from our sins in His own blood*").

a. It would seem hard to determine with certainty the preferable reading. The Greek words, *λούσαντι*, washed, and *λυσαντι*, loosed, differ in only one letter; the textual evidence is not altogether decisive: under different figures both convey the same essential truth; and, we may add, in this very Book that truth is elsewhere presented under figures very similar, if not the very same;—chap. vii. 14, "Washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," and chap. v. 9, "Thou wast slain and didst purchase," etc. Long-cherished association would plead for the Authorised; and many would condemn the reading of the Revised as unpoetical and dull when compared with the other. We hardly think either text or sentiment can decide. However, though against all former feeling, we have been led to give the preference to the new. The context seems decisive, at least when viewed in the light of the Old Testament history evidently referred to. The words, "He made us a kingdom, priests," etc., are all but an exact quotation from Exod. xix. 6, "Ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests." John had represented Christ as the true David, and he would now represent the people of Christ as the true Israel of God; in fact, throughout this entire Book Christians are called by the name of Israel. By keeping this in view, the careful interpreter will find not a little simple and clear, which he might otherwise find perplexed and dark.

Of course the Christian Church is no more to be identified with ancient Israel than is Christ with the ordinary succession of David. It becomes us to mark wherein they differ as well as wherein they agree. Now, if we turn to Exod. xix. we shall find

that the constitution of Israel into a kingdom is clearly set forth. They had been recently emancipated from the bondage of Egypt, we may say, "loosed" from the iron yoke of Pharaoh. We need not say, the bondage was typical of a greater bondage, and the deliverance was typical of a greater deliverance—nay, the blood of the paschal lamb was typical of the infinitely more precious blood here alluded to. In Exod. vi. 6, 7, Jehovah is represented as saying, "Say unto the children of Israel, I (am) Jehovah, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgment; and I will take you to Me for a people, and I will be to you a God." So Exod. xix. 3-6: "Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians,"—in fulfilment of the promise, and with a view to the design just indicated,—“and (how) I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then shall ye be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth (is) Mine: and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.” Deliverance first; constitution of a kingdom next.

This idea is implied in the announcement of the fundamental laws of the kingdom,—chap. xx. 1, 2: "I (am) Jehovah thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage;"—we may safely interpose, Therefore, "thou shalt have no other gods before Me," etc. Jehovah claims to be the King of the kingdom of Israel, not as Universal Creator, but as the Deliverer or Redeemer of His people. The parallel between this and the like work and kingdom of Christ is very obvious;—deliverance first; kingdom next. Thus we find the idea of being loosed, delivered, redeemed from our sins, with their burdens and bondage, is decidedly more suitable than that of being washed from them, with their stains and pollutions. Hence, when, in chap. v., the ideas of deliverance and of kingdom are introduced, Christians are not said to have washed, but to have been purchased or redeemed. In keeping with this, in chap. vii., when Christians are spoken of as already a part of that kingdom, coming indeed out of the Great Tribulation, they are said, and that most fitly, to have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb,"—as we have said, from the contracted stains and pollutions of sin. In the case

before us, Christ's work of the redemption of sinners is referred to, whilst in that just alluded to the Spirit's progressive work of sanctification is evidently intended.

We might illustrate this in many ways. Especially might we refer to the sacred ordinance of the Lord's Supper, implying, as it does, this very constitution of Christians into the kingdom here spoken of. "This cup," Luke xxii. 20, "is the New Covenant in My blood," "which is shed," Matt. xxvi. 28; "for many for the remission of sins;"—just as the blood of the paschal lamb pointed to the deliverance of Israel and to the Old Covenant. The parallel is complete; and the proper reading in question seems decided.

6. What, then, is really meant by the words before us? Christ is said to have loosed His people from their sins by His blood. This points to the great sacrifice for sin, which He offered once for all. The idea of a ransom is clearly involved. Whatever we may think of the nature, we must hold by the fact, of a true propitiation. Evidently the reference is, at least in the first instance, to the actual fact of the death of Christ, viewed as thus for sin. But, it may be asked, can it be said that He actually loosed His people from their sins when He died on the Cross? Some would maintain that He did, and that the real Gospel is the announcement of what they deem the fact, that He has done so, that they are free, that God has accepted them, and that the error in which sinners are involved is this, that they do not believe that they are thus free and accepted. Were this correct, then faith would be no condition or instrument of salvation. However, it is not correct, but involves a very marked confusion of ideas.

Many have no clear vision of what the Atonement does of itself and apart from faith, nay, before faith is so much as possible, and of what that Atonement does viewed as trusted, accepted, welcomed in order to forgiveness and salvation. In illustration, we can perhaps do no better than keep by the typical deliverance to which we have been alluding. We may first refer to the blood of the paschal lamb. The lamb had to be killed and the blood obtained, if that blood would protect the firstborn of Israel from the destroying angel. Now, we might say, that blood did so protect. Heads of families might have said, Our children are protected by the blood so shed. They would have said so truly; but they would not have expressed the whole truth. The blood might have been supplied, but yet would not have actually

availed for its real end, unless also sprinkled on the lintels and doorposts according to Divine command. So of the blood of Jesus. It delivers. The words are true, "He hath loosed us from our sins by His blood;" yet they do not express the whole truth. If simply let alone, if not used or applied by faith or by the acceptance of Him who died, it never would or could have effected such a release. So in the case of the typical deliverance, Jehovah might have been said to have redeemed Israel by His mighty arm, by His miraculous judgments. These certainly prepared the way; but if the people had not made use of it, they never would or could have been actually delivered. So Christ has done all needed for our deliverance. Every obstacle has been removed. Sinners have actually to receive the Atonement; and then, and then only, are they, in the full sense of the words, loosed from their sins. In fact, Christ may be said to loose, because He provided the needed sacrifice; the Spirit of Christ may be said to loose, because He leads to the proper use of the sacrifice; and the sinner may be said to loose and to be loosed, because he has been led to accept the sacrifice.

c. How grand and precious this release! That moment Jesus is accepted, all sin is forgiven, and the believer is loosed from the condemning power of sin. That moment forgiveness is enjoyed, Jesus is loved, the heart is renewed, sanctification is begun, and thus far the believer is loosed from the enslaving power of sin. That moment Jesus thus becomes the Righteousness and Sanctification of the believer, He becomes also his Redemption, and he is loosed from the destructive power of sin, even from death itself and from the fear of death, which is really abolished; whilst life, eternal life, is begun through union with "the Firstborn of (or from) the dead."

(4) "*And made us a kingdom, priests unto His God and Father*" (Authorised Version, "*kings and priests*").

a. Here "kingdom" is to be preferred to "kings," both because of textual correctness, and because, as we have just seen, of its harmony with both the writer's design and the passage of Scripture evidently referred to. The title, "kings," would not be unsuitable. Elsewhere they are said to "reign," and thus really to be kings. However, here, as in Exod. xix., the kingdom of the Messiah is intended. A most glorious kingdom it is. Most becoming it is, if we may so say, for the Father to seek such a kingdom. That the Great Jehovah should have no immortal family, no everlasting kingdom, ought to

appear so unnatural, so unlikely, so contrary to all reasonable thought of such a Being, that we should find no difficulty in believing what is here stated, nay, should rather find it hard to doubt the truth of it. Yet, the idea of such a kingdom is so glorious, that we need not wonder to find faith overwhelmed by it; so that only by having Christ richly dwelling in our hearts, and thus having this kingdom within us, as a conscious and undoubted reality, can faith triumph over the tendency or temptation to doubt.

b. As implied, this kingdom consists of all really "loosed from their sins," and truly bound to Christ and to God in faith and love; in other words, of all who receive Jesus as their Saviour, and give themselves up to Him as their King. They belong to Him by purchase, by faith, by self-surrender, by love, by loyal obedience. Such are all the true Israel of God. Hence one important distinction between this New Israel and Ancient Israel, or between the Israel of the New Covenant and the Israel of the Old. The spiritual deliverance here spoken of invariably constitutes the subject of it a real subject of this kingdom; whereas the physical deliverance did not actually constitute the Israelites "a kingdom of priests." It was only promised that they would become such on the condition of faithful obedience. The Law, written on tables of stone, was about to be given. If they so loved the God of their deliverance as to obey it, they would be to Him "a peculiar treasure and a kingdom of priests." The true Israel, as loving Christ, are the children of God, have His Law written in their hearts, and are in reality subjects of the kingdom at once of grace and of glory.

→ *c.* This kingdom, thus made up of those united to Christ and so born again, or of the twice-born, is, as He Himself declared, "not of this world," but, like Himself, "from above," and yet belongs to both worlds, to earth and to heaven. We refer to this, because it is well to keep it in view, if we would understand various parts of this Book. The kingdom partakes of the character of the King. Its subjects are viewed as having died and risen from the dead in Him. To them death has been abolished; or, their death is viewed as already past. They are spoken of as already with Christ in heaven, or as "those who dwell in heaven," whilst all others are called "the inhabitants of the earth." In fact, the kingdom of grace on earth and the kingdom of glory in heaven are sometimes viewed, not as two kingdoms, but as one and the same kingdom. To belong to the

one is to belong to both. The kingdom is one, Divine, heavenly, and eternal.

d. "*Priests unto His God and Father.*" These words are in apposition, and simply indicate the character of the subjects of the kingdom,—“a kingdom of priests.” In fact, they become collectively a kingdom to God by becoming individually priests to Him. Priests “offer gifts and sacrifices.” The Great High Priest offered Himself as the one great sacrifice, atonement, or propitiation for sin; and that once for all, now absolutely perfect, therefore never to be repeated, and nothing to be added to it or taken from it. It was accepted by God, and declared to be accepted by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. It has now to be simply accepted by men in order that they may be accepted by God. They have no sin-offering to make. Still, they have a very real offering to present, a true thank-offering, an offering of gratitude and love,—even of themselves, “a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, their reasonable service.” This great and complete and acceptable act of self-surrender to God through Jesus Christ may be called the first and the constituting act of their spiritual priesthood. This self-surrender is never to be retracted, but to be eternal. Out of it is to flow the whole stream of subsequent priestly life. From the very first the sacrifice of self-surrender or self-consecration is to be complete. There must be no reserve. If faith were perfect from the first, the self-surrender or self-consecration would be the same. While the former remains imperfect, the latter will remain imperfect also. It thus appears, that to be constituted priests to God is simply to be made loving and obedient servants to Him. This is finely expressed, Isa. lxi, 6: “Ye shall be named the priests of Jehovah: men shall call you the ministers (or servants) of our God.” Thus early do we find predicted the glorious universal priesthood of the words before us, the priesthood of all Christians without exception; hence implying as it does the freest access to God through Christ.

e. We would remark, that, as this priesthood is thus universal, to call any special class by the name of priests is to depart from the simplicity and authority of Scripture. Unless this priesthood of all Christians without exception, we have reference to no other, except to the one and only true and glorious priesthood of Jesus Christ. To assume the functions of any other priesthood is to be guilty of the highest presumption on the one hand, and of robbing the Christian people of their crown of

priestly dignity on the other,—two great evils which cannot fail to draw down the displeasure of the great High Priest Himself, and to introduce into His kingdom of true and impartial liberty the principle and the practice of spiritual despotism on the one part, and the spirit and the degradation of spiritual bondage on the other.

f. Here, in the words, “a kingdom, priests to God,” or “a kingdom of priests,” we have a brief, a true, and a most important description of what the true, scriptural, and uncorrupted kingdom of Christ or Israel of God really is; so that, whilst we are taught what is meant by this kingdom throughout this Book, and therefore what is intended by its future exaltation on earth, we are led to see that any Church which introduces an unauthorised priesthood, or which converts its bishops or presbyters into a priestly class, must be regarded as more or less corrupt. With the advances of priestly claims, we may clearly trace the progress of spiritual corruption and the restoration of genuine paganism. History fearfully illustrates the truth of this.

(5) “*To Him (be) the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*” The hearts of the redeemed thus flow forth in gratitude and love and praise. They would ascribe to Him all the glory of their redemption, and yield to Him all dominion over themselves. But this comes far short of what their words imply. They think of His precious blood, and ascribe to Him the glory of the great Life, the great Humiliation, the great Self-sacrifice, the great Redemption. They give to Him the glory of restoring a fallen race to the bosom and home of their Father and God. They ascribe to Him the glory of fitness to occupy the highest place in the universe, and that as the highest manifestation of the glory of God. They express their worship and adoration of Him as personally possessing all Divine and human excellence, the glory of every possible perfection.

To this glory they add the dominion which they believe to be due to Him. In His glorious Person they see a perfect union of infinite goodness and infinite power; and they express the right of that Goodness to wield that power. Over His own people they acknowledge His perfect right to reign. They do vastly more. They rejoice as well in His might as in His right to have dominion over the whole world, over the evil as well as the good, over His and their enemies, over all the kings and kingdoms of the world. Their words, we may be sure, glance into the distant future, and predictively set forth His dominion over the hearts of

the children of men, when, as afterwards declared, He shall be crowned with many crowns and have dominion over the whole renewed world. Nay, more. The force of the words cannot be exhausted without placing before the mind the glorious vision of Jesus really and eternally seated on His Father's throne, Jehovah's throne of universal empire, all creatures, angels and men, principalities and powers, being made subject unto Him. Well, well indeed, is it added, in Greek and Hebrew, *vaí, áμήν*, as if to unite Gentile and Jew, all true Israelites of every age and nation, in one solemn and harmonious assent!

8. "*Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they who pierced Him: and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.*"

(1) "*Behold, He cometh with clouds.*" Jesus has been viewed as a Saviour and King. Here He is viewed as a King and Judge. He will deal with foes as well as friends. He who will not receive Him as a Saviour must meet Him as a Judge. Appearing for judgment, He comes in majesty and power, or, as here and elsewhere figuratively said, "with clouds"—"the clouds of heaven." He will indeed come in great glory to perfect His eternal kingdom. Still, more is here meant. He will so come as to strike terror into every unrenewed and impenitent heart. There is here a reference to more than one important passage of Scripture, yet emphatically to the words of Christ Himself,—Matt. xxiv. 30, 31: "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." Whilst these words as well as those before us point directly to the final and universal judgment, they are assuredly to be viewed, like the words already considered, "Behold, I come quickly," as including a reference to all the intervening judicial comings of Christ, such as that of the judgment of the Jewish nation, which has well been regarded as typical of the final and universal, and as that of the judgment set forth under the sixth seal—nay, as that of every nation guilty of the persistent rejection of Christ.

Nor is this all. We must view the words as true of individual men of all generations no less than of the whole collective body of mankind. We must not confound or identify the figure with the reality. Every eye, which sees Jesus coming to condemn, "beholds Him coming with clouds," whether from a sick-bed, or from the midst of some storm of personal adversity. "He

comes with the clouds of heaven," wherever He comes with terror. That His words inclusively refer to all individuals, as well as to mankind collectively, is clearly evident from His subsequent allusion to the faithless servant, of which we have already treated.

(2) "*And every eye shall see Him.*" Willing or unwilling, all shall see the Great King thus coming in power and glory to judge the world. How sublime a sight! How welcome to the believing and faithful! How awful to the impenitent and unbelieving!

(3) "*And they who pierced Him.*" Even they shall see Him, shall be constrained to behold Him, however conscience and terror might make them shrink from the sight. We cannot suppose an exclusive reference to the Jews who actually crucified Him, or even to the Jewish nation which rejected Him. He may be said to be pierced by all who reject His salvation—nay, over and over again by His friends when they prove faithless to Him. However, more than this is meant. The persons here intended have continued to pierce the loving and forgiving heart of Jesus, by living and dying in unbelief and sin or in the final rejection of Himself.

(4) "*And all the tribes of the earth shall mourn because of Him.*"

a. As already said, we have here a virtual repetition of the words of Christ, which, again, are quoted from Zech. xii. 10: "And I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication: and they shall look on Him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son." This mourning, however, is that of deepest penitential sorrow, because of the guilt of so piercing Him; whilst the mourning of the words before us is that of terrible anguish and dismay, because of the further and unpardoned guilt of rejecting Him who had been pierced for their salvation. Still, we have here no misquotation or misconception of the meaning of Zechariah, whose impressive words are simply used as best fitted to convey a different idea, and that in relation to a different class of people. Penitent Israelites would mourn over the sin of crucifying and the sins which crucified their own Messiah, and that after they had been led to believe in Him. Impenitent men of every race would also mourn, but in a totally different spirit, because of the guilt involved in His crucifixion, and of the vastly greater guilt of rejecting the Crucified—we might say, the guilt of continuing

to crucify Him all their days. The prophet alludes to the former. In the words before us, and without shadow of inconsistency, the allusion is to the latter.

δ. It may be well here to note what has been regarded as a decided proof of the common authorship of this Book and of the Fourth Gospel. In the first place, John is the only Evangelist who records the fact of the piercing of the side of Christ or alludes to the prophecy concerning it. The introduction of this is so far evidential, but by no means decisive. However, in the second place, we find a remarkable fact which we cannot but deem very highly evidential. We refer to the use of the Greek verb, here rendered "pierced," *ἐξεκέντησαν*, and found, not in the LXX., but in the Gospel and in this place, proving that, in both cases, the Hebrew was directly translated, and that by the same word, and thus suggesting, as it has done, a common authorship. This may at least be taken as one of those "undesigned coincidences" which point in this direction.

(5) "*Even so, Amen*,"—"So let it be," as before, in Greek and Hebrew, and thus doubly emphatic. Thus is perfect acquiescence expressed in the judicial, as in the saving, work of the Blessed Redeemer. We may well regard judgment as "the strange work," as mercy is the delight, as well of Jesus as of Jehovah. Our spirit, therefore, may be in harmony with that of the Great Judge, though our acquiescence should be painful in the extreme. To punish even His persistent enemies must be to His heart of deepest compassion inconceivably more painful still.

9. "*I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.*"

(1) These are evidently the words of the Father. By Him they are again used, chap. xxi. 6; whilst in chap. xxii. 13 they seem clearly to have been used by the Son and of Himself. Alford has indeed said, "These words have hitherto been said of the Father; and in all probability it is so here likewise, whether we assume the words to be spoken by Christ in God's name, or by the Eternal Father Himself." However, in the latter case they seem as naturally to refer directly and personally to the Son, as in the former to the Father. Nor can we deny the propriety or likelihood of such a reference to both; as we find virtually the same thing undoubtedly said of Christ. Whilst excluding, with the Revised Version, the words as used of Christ in chap. i. 11, we still find the Son saying, ver. 17, "I am the first, and I am the last"—in fact, expressly saying of Himself, to

all intents, all that is affirmed of the Father; "the first and the last" being simply the equivalent of "the Alpha and the Omega," "the beginning and the end." In this we have another of those coincidences which tend to prove the common authorship of this Book and of the Gospel of John. In the latter we find Jesus affirming more clearly, more frequently, and more decidedly than in the other Gospels, His oneness with the Father: "I and My Father are One,"—even identifying Himself with Jehovah: "Before Abraham was, I AM." In this Book there is no repetition of aught contained in the Gospel, suggesting the idea of a copyist. If we simply think of John as penetrated with the idea of the Divinity of Jesus, as he certainly was, we can easily account for the marks of the common authorship referred to.

(2) But why are the words introduced here at all? They seem clearly to indicate the real speaker in the case of those which go before, and at the same time to give the Divine word or even oath as to their truth and certain fulfilment. So, in the Old Testament, we find "I (am) Jehovah" frequently and most solemnly introduced. Whether correctly or not, we have thought that here there may be a reference to Exod. vi. 1-8, in which Jehovah speaks to Moses of the intended deliverance of Israel and overthrow of Pharaoh, just as here the great salvation and terrible judgment are referred to; the former typical of the latter; the one associated with the Old Covenant, and the other with the New; two great works fitted at the outset to try the faith and courage of Israelites on the one hand, and of Christians on the other; and therefore making, in both cases, such a solemn assurance most befitting. The words before us are of the same force, if not of exactly the same form, as those addressed to Moses, which may be given thus—"I am Jehovah" ("the Alpha and the Omega"): "and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, as (El Shaddai) God Almighty" (just as here); "and by My name Jehovah was I not known to them?" (implying that He certainly was, and here virtually introduced and explained, "Who is, and who was, and who is to come"). Then the whole promissory communication is closed with the solemn "I (am) Jehovah," just as we have supposed the whole of this verse to be here introduced.

(3) How simple and sublime this use of the first and last letters of the Greek language, "I am the Alpha and the Omega"—*τὸ Α καὶ τὸ Ω*! So the rabbinical use of the first and last letters of

the Hebrew, Aleph and Tau, has been pointed out as expressive of completeness, entireness; "the word **תת**," made up of the two, "being a name of the Shekinah, because it comprehends all the letters," and, doubtless because the Shekinah, as revealing God, is the all-in-all of all knowledge or of all that which language can express. Be this as it may, we have here a reference to "the First and the Last,"—the great I AM of Old Testament Scripture,—“the Beginning and the End,”—the All in All,” which Jehovah is, and which He will, as Paul sets forth, gloriously appear to be, when Christ has put down all enemies and delivered the kingdom to the Father.

(4) Such, then, is the address to the seven churches of Asia, and through them to all the churches of every age and country. It is worthy of Inspiration to provide, and of the Head of the Church to send through His beloved Apostle. Let us seek to appreciate its spirit and design. Whilst all may derive from it the richest good, the careful student will find in it a key to the meaning of not a little of the contents of this wonderful Book.

III.—VISION OF THE SON OF GOD AS THE DIVINE AND ONLY HEAD OF THE CHURCH UNIVERSAL.

REV. i. 9-20.

"I John, your brother and fellow-partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and patience (which are) in Jesus Christ, was in the Isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, What thou seest, write in a book, and send to the seven churches : to Ephesus, and to Smyrna, and to Pergamum, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice which spake with me. And having turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the candlesticks One like unto a Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle. His head and His hair were white as white wool, (white) as snow; and His eyes (were) as a flame of fire; and His feet like to burnished brass, as if refined in a furnace; and His voice as the voice of many waters. And He had in His hand seven stars: and out of His mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword: and His countenance (was) as the sun shining in his strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; I am the First and the

Last, and the Living One ; and I was dead ; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of Death and of Hades. Write therefore the things which thou sawest, the things which are, and the things which shall come to pass after these. The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in My right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks : the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches ; and the seven candlesticks are the seven churches."

1. "*I John, your brother and fellow-partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and patience (which are) in Jesus, was in the Isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.*"

(1) Here the Great Prophecy may be said to begin. As it has been remarked, the "I John" of the New Testament prophet corresponds with the "I Daniel" of the prophet of the Old Testament, whom he most resembles, and of whose prophecies his are to no small extent a marked continuation. Most fitly does he thus introduce himself after the manner of Daniel, as he is about to record a vision almost identical with one of that prophet—we may say with safety, of the same mysterious Being, under a not dissimilar form, even the Son of God (Dan. x.). It has been not inaptly said that John is the Daniel of the New Testament, and Daniel the John of the Old. The one was "a man greatly beloved" of Jehovah ; the other was "the disciple whom Jesus loved" ; and both have been most highly honoured to convey the most wonderful revelation of "the kingdom of heaven" in itself and in its relation to the kingdoms of the world.

(2) "*I John, your brother and fellow-partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and patience (which are) in Jesus.*" This is altogether like this saintly man, and like all saintly men. They feel and express their common brotherhood in Christ, and breathe the same noble and martyr spirit. How fine a description of himself and of all true Christians ! All are brethren, children of the same Divine Father, and heirs of the same eternal kingdom. At this time, John was a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and those addressed were suffering persecution along with him. United to Christ, he and they alike shared in the present blessings and prospective glories of that yet infant kingdom, whose heavenly character made it hateful to all earthly minds, and whose apparent feebleness and insignificance, combined with its lofty and exclusive claims, brought down upon its subjects the contempt and the wrath of mankind. Within the proper sphere of this kingdom, they were all light and love and

peace and joy; whilst, in connection with all its surroundings, even with the people who used to love them and the things which used to delight them, they had become strangers in an enemy's country, exposed to trials and sorrows and sufferings to which they had been totally unaccustomed. Sharers in the blessings and glories of the kingdom, they were called upon, and that not unreasonably, to be sharers also in its peculiar and unavoidable tribulation.

Nor is such tribulation to be looked upon as a mere necessary evil, but as a part of the portion of all Christians, which they are to accept from the hand of their Martyr-King, and out of which they are finally to arise purer, wiser, nobler, better men. Thus may all, who thus suffer with Christ, expect to be glorified with Him,—in fact, to be numbered with those of whom it will be said, “These are they who come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God.” Sometimes, indeed, the tribulation has been very awful and long-continued; and then it has made an almost unendurable demand upon the faith and the patience of its victims. Ah! who can tell the silent woes, the secret sufferings, the cruel pitiless tortures of many of the most noble, most loving, and most devoted witnesses for Christ? They needed all the patience here spoken of—a patience more than human, a patience seemingly implying nothing short of a miraculous interposition of Divine soul-sustaining grace. Notwithstanding all its terrors, we may well say, How much has the Church been indebted to all her tribulation, for her frequent and needful purification, and for the development of the strongest and loveliest forms of Christian life in her sons and daughters!

(3) “*I John . . . was in the Isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.*”

a. These words suggest that this island was small and not widely known. One of the Sporades, it was rocky, barren, and gloomy, a place of banishment and imprisonment, about forty miles from the coast of Asia Minor, and therefore not far from what is held to have been the sphere of the aged Apostle's labours;—in one sense a sad dwelling-place for him, and yet in another doubtless a most suitable region for the reception of so mysterious and glorious a revelation of the future.

b. John was there, we are told, “for or on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.” Some have strangel

identified this word and testimony with the Apocalypse itself ; and so they have inferred that the Apostle was led or sent for the purpose of there receiving it. Few, we think, will accept this hypothesis. Others have supposed John to have gone in order to preach the Gospel. The context suggests, as almost all maintain, the idea of his banishment for preaching it. He thus naturally and at once alludes to the tribulation in which he was a partaker. We need hardly refer to another hypothesis—that John was in this melancholy isle, not in person, but only in spirit. If so, the reference to his being or becoming “in the spirit,” or in a spiritual ecstasy, would have preceded, or taken the place of, this plain statement of fact. Doubtless this imprisonment was overruled for good, preparing the mind and heart of the Apostle for his prophetic work.

The circumstances of the more ancient writers, such as David, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, sad and painful as they often were, assuredly prepared them for their respective kinds of prophecy ; and so have been those of not a few of our greatest Christian teachers ; so, for example, it was with the marvellous dreamer Bunyan. So it was with John. He had to feel the mighty persecuting power of Rome, that he might be the better able to set forth the great imperial and sacerdotal enemy of the pure Church of Jesus Christ.

c. Here we seem now led to inquire concerning the date of the Apocalypse, as to which we need not say that the most marked difference of opinion has obtained ; some regarding the persecution under Nero as intended, and thus carrying the date as far back as A.D. 68 ; and others, the great majority, accepting the testimony of Irenæus, that John was banished towards the close of the reign of Domitian, and thus bringing the date as far down as A.D. 95 or 96. We shall refer to no other view ; nor can we here largely treat of this interesting subject. We must refer the reader to those works in which it is most amply discussed. At the same time we may say that, if compelled to choose between the two extreme dates, we would most decidedly prefer the later.

(a) As to the earlier, which carries us back towards the closing ministry of Paul, and to a time before the fall of Jerusalem and dispersion of the Jewish nation, we might assign various reasons for its rejection. If there had been no other, the state of the Churches, as indicated in the Seven Epistles, suggests a sufficient one for a considerably later date. Nor can we deem the

Neronic persecution of Jews in general, and not of Christians in particular, such as would have, in the face of the entire evidence, been never so much as thought of, unless for the exigencies of a theory of interpretation which supposes the early fulfilment of the greater part of the Apocalypse, and which cannot admit of any date after that of the destruction of the Jewish Temple. Of this interpretation we would here only say, that it proceeds on the basis of a literal application of certain passages which can be rightly understood in only a symbolical sense.

(b) As to the later date, that of the reign of Domitian, the express testimony of Irenæus, supported or at least followed by subsequent writers, is very widely held to be almost, if not altogether, decisive. We have never been able to put so much weight on this testimony. Whilst not questioning the truthfulness of this excellent man, we cannot put confidence in the correctness of his statements as to the details of Apostolic history. His well-known and most egregious error as to the life of Christ, which he extends to fifty years, seems more than enough to shake our faith in his testimony regarding the period in question, which was so far a matter of tradition, and with respect to which he might have been in some way misinformed, and so led to fall into a similar, but more easily accountable, error. Whilst writing thus, we feel bound to add that the egregious error alluded to may after all have been no error of Irenæus, or of any one so acquainted with the Gospels as he undoubtedly was, but of some less enlightened and less estimable writer, who, like certain others, deemed it a work as well of piety as of wisdom so to alter and to add to the writings of the Fathers as to make them serviceable in the doctrinal controversies of later times, and even for the support of ecclesiastical corruption.

(c) Our position, accordingly, is this,—that we cannot accept so late a date on the ground of such testimony alone, but must be guided mainly by the general evidence. If that evidence, taken as a whole, should point to a considerably earlier period, then are we free to accept it. By so doing we should at least escape more than one very considerable difficulty. We shall allude to only one,—we mean that due to the style of the Apocalypse, which many hold to be absolutely insuperable. That it differs very greatly from that of the Gospel and Epistles of John cannot be denied. A common authorship has been deemed utterly inadmissible. If John, it has been said, was the author of the Apocalypse, he could not have been the author of the Gospel

and Epistles; and, if he was the author of the Gospel and Epistles, he could not have been the author of the Apocalypse. If all were written at or nearly at the same time, and that towards the close of such a patriarchal life, how can we account for the naturally unpolished and highly Hebraistic language of the one, and for the simple and almost classic elegance of the others? Alford has freely said, "I fairly own . . . that the difficulty has never yet been thoroughly solved."

Hence at least the likelihood of a much earlier date than that of Irenæus, though by no means necessarily of one so early as the time of Nero. Such a change of style need not have required so long a period as many may suppose. Still, it would seem impossible for John or any man to have so very greatly changed in so very short a time, and at the very end of so long a life. This would seem almost demonstrative of a considerably earlier date. If the difficulty cannot be removed, we know of nothing to prevent the full acceptance of it. We do not seem at all bound to hold that John could have been banished by nothing short of an imperial decree, or at no time except one of some general persecution. Why should we deem it impossible for him to have been so treated by some local magistrate, whether under the influence of personal prejudice, or constrained by the clamour of the ignorant mob, or by the false accusation of hostile Jews? He might have been so at least in many a way unknown to us; and therefore, if time must be granted to account for the difference of style referred to, we have simply to assume as a fact this earlier date, which no one can reject as impossible. In this way, the common authorship may be deemed perfectly unassailable. At the same time, it may be admitted that Alford has suggested a most ingenious hypothesis on which that authorship may be seen to consist with the Irenæan date.

We may note the following: "It has been shown more than once, and in our own country by Dr. Davidson in his Introduction, that the roughnesses and solecisms in the Apocalypse have been, for the purposes of argument, very much exaggerated." "The subject of the Apocalypse is so different from those of the Gospel and Epistles, that we may well expect a not inconsiderable difference of style." "The diction and form in which they were conveyed were the result of a deliberate exercise of a special gift of the Spirit, matured by practice." "In the Apocalypse the case may be conceived to have been different. The necessarily rhapsodical and mysterious character of the

book may have led to the Apostle being left more to his vernacular and less correct Greek. . . . The Hebraistic style may have come more naturally in a writing so fashioned on Old Testament models, and bound by so many links to the prophecies of Hebrew prophets. The style, too, of advanced age may have dropped the careful elaboration of the preceding years, and resumed the rougher character of early youth." We specially refer to this last sentence as most ingenious, and as suggestive of the most likely way in which John might have used his more highly cultivated style in the one case and in the quietude and repose of ordinary life, and yet even some time after have been constrained to use his earlier and less cultivated style in the other case and under all the excitement of Apocalyptic vision. To no small extent we seem here to find a solution of the difficulty in question. To those satisfied with it, the supposition of an earlier date is not required. To those not so satisfied, that supposition is open, and ought to be sufficient.

To the hypothesis of Alford there ought, we think, to be added another—namely, that John seems to have been led, by way of preparation for his prophetic work, to pursue a course of the most earnest and profound study of the Old Testament Scriptures in the original Hebrew and the Greek translation. We must not suppose, as we are too apt to do, that inspiration sets aside all need of such study and such preparation. We might show that the inspiration of the old prophets made very great use of their knowledge, acquirements, habits, and the like. Thus we find Ezekiel writing after the manner of a priest, and Daniel after that of a statesman. The almost incredible number of allusions to the Hebrew Scriptures presupposes just such study of them as we have suggested, and as would naturally lead him to use his earlier and more Hebraistic style. If, then, his closing years were thus studiously and meditatively employed, the Greek of the Septuagint would again become natural to him, and, as Alford has well said, "the style of advanced age may have dropped the careful elaboration of the preceding years, and resumed the rougher character of early youth." Usually the difficulty has been to find sufficient time to account for the rise of the aged Apostle's style from the less to the more highly cultivated form. Here we seem rather to have found the true key to the fall of that style from its more refined to its rougher character. Thus the Gospels and Epistles may have been written some considerable time before the Apocalypse, whilst the Apocalypse may

have been written at the date assigned to it by Irenæus. Thus, too, whilst the earlier date, which we supposed to be possible, may be accepted by any who may prefer it, the later may be fairly maintained along with the Apostolic authorship of the Apocalypse.

2. "*I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, What thou seest, write in a book, and send to the seven Churches: to Ephesus, and to Smyrna, and to Pergamum, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.*"

(1) "*I was in the Spirit.*" Here John refers to more than any highly spiritual frame of mind, however much this may be presupposed,—even to that ecstatic state which the Spirit of revelation created as of necessary preparation for the reception of the coming Apocalypse. Rather, perhaps, the words may be taken to include that whole complex state in which, not only are the faculties withdrawn from their natural objects and from the external world—nay, from all the objects of ordinary and voluntary thought, but the soul has presented to it the successive parts of the whole revelation, with its sights and sounds, its visions and utterances. Thus he might have been said to have been so in the Spirit of God, or the Spirit of God might have been said to have been so in him, that his inner or spiritual being was as if so subjectively influenced that he was as if objectively presented with what he saw and heard; all appearing to him as vividly perceived and as certainly real as if he had been actually introduced into a new world, and were commanded and enabled to write in a book, with unerring accuracy, all that he saw and heard. What he may have written after the ecstatic state had passed away the Spirit would be given to bring to remembrance, as He had been long before promised and given to him and his fellow-Apostles to bring to their remembrance what Christ desired them to testify concerning Himself to the world. As already hinted, the Divine Spirit would so act as to enable John to make use of his previous knowledge of the Scriptures; and hence the amazingly complex and intricate character of the Book. Still, the very highest form of inspiration must have been granted. John could of course write what he saw and heard; but assuredly he could not understand the real import of very much of what he wrote. In this respect he would resemble the prophets of earlier days, who are said to have ministered, not to themselves, but to those of future times.

(2) "*On the Lord's Day.*" Strangely, there are those who suppose this to be the Day of the Lord, the Day of His Second Coming, to which John was so carried forward in spirit as to behold His appearing and reign on earth. The words which immediately follow prove the contrary by presenting a totally different vision of Christ. The reference seems clearly to be to the first day of the week, here for the first time in Scripture beautifully and appropriately called the Lord's Day. The adjective and not the noun is indeed used. So it is also in the like beautiful and appropriate name, the Lord's Supper, which Christians might do well to use instead of the heathenish one, the Sacrament, by which it has been long supplanted. The same thing might have been said as to the like heathenish Sunday. Why John was honoured so highly on that day we are not expressly told. We may suppose that on it his mind was in a highly spiritual state, at least so far preparing him for the wondrous vision of Him who on it triumphantly rose from the dead, and who specially appeared as the risen and exalted Head of the Church, saying of Himself, "I was dead, and, behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades."

(3) "*And I heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, What thou seest, write in a book, and send to the seven Churches: to Ephesus, and to Smyrna, and to Pergamum, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.*" (As in the Revised Version, we have here omitted, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last.")

This voice, we have little reason to doubt, was that of Jesus Christ. It is no proof to the contrary, that, whilst here it is compared to that of a trumpet, it is afterwards compared to that of many waters, as on this occasion it might be like the former, whilst, apart from special use, it might be fitly likened to the latter. That this is correct seems evident from what is added—namely, that, when John turned "to see the voice," he saw Christ in the midst of the candlesticks. Of course it might be said that there was here a designed allusion to the sounding of the trumpet on Mount Sinai at the giving of the Law; and that therefore the voice here compared to a trumpet may have been that of the angel sent to convey this revelation to John. However, we prefer on the whole to regard Christ as intended.

As to the Churches here expressly named, we need not say much, as they may be more fitly treated of in connection with the

epistles addressed to them. Their number is symbolical. Their order, apparently, was determined by mere geographical situation, and not, as some suppose, by their spiritual condition. It has been well remarked, that the order is that which would naturally occur to any one contemplating them from such a point of view as Patmos. The eye would naturally rest on Ephesus first; then more northward, eastward, southward. This should be kept in mind, as it has been held that the seven churches represent the whole Church, not in its simple totality, but at seven successive periods of its history, as if it had been destined to pass through seven distinct spiritual states corresponding to those of the churches—an Ephesian state, a Smyrnan state, and so on. For this there is no proof whatever. It seems to destroy the real force of the symbolic number, that of simple totality; whilst it implies what was in itself most unlikely, namely, that a strictly geographical order should be a wonderfully spiritual order,—an order running through long periods of the Church's history. The idea of such a thing has no basis in the revelation itself, and ought to be rejected as a vain and fanciful addition to what we are solemnly warned not to alter.

3. "*And I turned to see the voice which spake with me. And having turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the candlesticks One like unto a Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle.*"

(1) Penetrated with the trumpet-tone of the mighty voice, John turned to see the Speaker, and saw, perhaps not such an one as he expected to see, but seven golden candlesticks, and One in human form in the midst of them. These candlesticks, we are afterwards informed, symbolised the seven churches just named, and so through them symbolised the entire Church of Jesus Christ. Whatever the full original import of the one seven-branched candlestick of the Hebrew Temple, the words before us suggest that, under one aspect at least, it represented the one people or kingdom of Israel, the one God to be worshipped and served, the one Divinely appointed worship; that kingdom being thus gifted with Divine light, and designed to give light to other nations involved in darkness with respect to God and the true way of life. Thus only can we find a real parallel between that ancient symbol and these symbols of the various churches or distinct portions of Christian Israel. None can fail to observe the marked difference between them. On the one side, we have only one

candlestick or lampstand with seven branches; whilst, on the other, we have seven perfectly separate candlesticks or lampstands. The ground of this designed difference seems very evident and simple: namely, that ancient Israel was intended to form one distinct and separate nation, whilst Christian Israel, besides being purely spiritual, was intended to be made up of many communities, increasing in number with the progress of the Gospel, gathered out of all countries, and, as indicated by this vision, designed to be under no one human or visible head, but one and only one Divine, invisible, and universal Head, even the all-present and the ever-present Royal High Priest, here unveiled as in the midst of the candlesticks, or, apart from the symbol, as tending and ruling over all His own churches,—all, like the candlesticks, separate and complete in themselves, yet all one in Him, who alone is in them all and over them all.

We are not expressly told where these lampstands were placed, or were seen by John; and yet we cannot err in supposing their place to correspond to that of the seven-branched candlestick of the Holy Place or first compartment of the ancient Tabernacle or Temple, by which seems clearly to have been symbolised the kingdom of God on earth, whilst by the inner compartment or Most Holy Place was represented the kingdom of God in heaven. In other words, we may say, the one pointed to the kingdom of grace and the other to the kingdom of glory; yet not as two kingdoms, but, like the one Temple whose component parts they were, the one and only one kingdom of Jesus Christ. We do not mean to say that John was made to feel as if within the old Temple, with all its emblematic furniture. He simply saw what symbolised the seven churches which represented the whole Church on earth, with their priestly Head.

(2) This sole rightful Head is represented by “One like unto a Son of man,” One in purely human form. We much prefer this to “One like unto the Son of man”; for, though certainly “the Son of man” and “the Son of God,” He was not at once recognised and described by John as such. This consists with the fact that we have here almost a repetition of the vision of the same mysterious One in Dan. x., in which the words “like the similitude of the sons of men” and “like the appearance of a man” can mean no more than “in human form.” Here this One is simply said to be present: He is not said to act. His promise is at least realised,—“Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” In the epistle to the Church in

Ephesus, He is said to walk, and so, as we must infer, to observe, to tend, to rule—in a word, to act in character as the Head and Ruler of all the churches. Hence He is said to be

(3) "*Clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle;*"—both robe and girdle being expressive of office, of dignity, of priestly function, of royal authority and power. This, however, we gather from His position as well as from His dress, and, we may add, from what follows. He was like the priest who trimmed the lamps of the Temple. He is a king as well as priest. In ancient Israel the priestly and kingly offices were kept entirely apart. The priest could not be king; the king could not be priest. Only the Divinely inspired or directly commissioned prophet could, for some temporary purpose, and without presumption, virtually perform the part of either, as in the case of Moses, Samuel, and Elijah. In Jesus, as in His expressive type, Melchizedek, and that according to express prediction, the offices of priest and king were conjoined. Here He appears as Royal High Priest, Mediatorial King, Divine and human Head of the redeemed Israel of God.

4. "*And His head and (His) hair (were) white as white wool, (white) as snow; and His eyes (were) as a flame of fire; and His feet like to burnished brass, as if refined in a furnace; and His voice as the voice of many waters.*"

(1) It may be well to remark here that, though John saw the entire vision, all would not appear, as in a fixed picture, equally visible at one and the same time. Thus he could not see the hair as white wool, the eyes of flame, or the sword of the mouth at the very moment the countenance appeared like the sun in his most dazzling light. The symbols should be viewed as so presented to the mind, that each shall, as it were, come so vividly out, that, for the passing moment, no one else shall be so seen as to prevent the full knowledge intended, or to destroy the completeness and congruity of the whole. Well may we say with Vitringa: "*Quam hoc Augustum et excellens est hieroglyphum! Cujus Personæ hi sunt characteres quam Divinæ?*" Certainly of none else than of the Son of God and Saviour of mankind. In fact, a more wonderful and truthful revelation of "The High Priest over the House of God" we could not have; but we must study symbol after symbol if we would have a right conception of the truth. How fearfully sad, then, the attempts of some to present to the eyes of their readers a picture of Christ as here symbolically set forth to the mind and the mind alone!

(2) We seem to have here a hendiadys for "the hair of His head." If this had been noticed, it would not have been suggested (by Alford) that the head here must mean the forehead, which assuredly is afterwards alluded to under the general term "countenance." As to the symbolic import, it seems strange that the idea of age, or rather, in this case, of eternity, should have been objected to (by Archbishop Trench) on the physiological ground that the whiteness of hair betokens decay. This is to forget that all is simple and symbolical; such hair is well fitted to set forth the idea of age, with all the wisdom, dignity and the like, associated with it. Here the symbol is undoubtedly borrowed from the description of "The Ancient of Days," Dan. vii. 9, where there can be no room to doubt that we have a symbol of eternity indicated by the name employed. Nor could a more appropriate symbol be found. Thus, used of Him who is from everlasting, it naturally implies that He is also to everlasting. The symbol simply suggests the wisdom, the dignity, the glory, the majesty, and, chiefly and emphatically, the eternity of Him of whom it is used. Here the One like a Son of man is evidently identified with "The Ancient of Days," the Eternal God, Jehovah, the great "I AM." The words of Vitranga are few and fine; "Albi capilli, ejus tum æternitatem tum majestatem mystice significant." Divinity and humanity form the mysterious and glorious personality of the Head of the Mediatorial Kingdom of God,—of Him who can be visibly the centre of the Church in heaven, and invisibly the Ruler of the Church on earth.

(3) "*And His eyes (were) as a flame of fire*;" the vision of John again agreeing with that of Daniel. In chap. ii. 18 He is expressly called "The Son of God." As Vitranga has said, "*Oculi instar flammæ ignis, perspicaciam divinæ et puræ mentis, omnia arcana pervadentis.*" All this is intended. The eye, or simply an eye, is a fine symbol of intelligence, or even of omniscience as here meant, and as indicated in the epistle to the Church in Thyatira, "all the Churches shall know that I am He who searcheth the reins and hearts." They are, then, all-seeing eyes, eyes of penetrating judicial power, eyes that can glow at the sight of evil with awful indignation, and at the sight of good with pure and warm delight. All these diversified symbols will appear most appropriate, if we simply remember that they set forth the character, the office and work of Jesus, not as He appears in heaven, but as He really is on earth; at once showing "His banner over" His obedient people to be

“love,” and proving that He rules the rebellious nations “with a rod of iron.”

(4) “*And His feet like to burnished brass, as if refined in a furnace.*” In Dan. x. 6 we have “And His arms and His feet like in colour to burnished brass.” We need not say that the apparently hybrid word, *chalco-libanus*, rendered fine or burnished brass, is of doubtful origin. According to the most satisfactory conjecture, it seems to have been formed of the Greek noun for brass, and a word of Greek form but of Hebrew origin—namely, the verb to make white, *לָבַן*, and thus to mean white or glowing brass; the words which follow bringing out the real meaning, “as if it had been refined,” or as if glowing, “in a furnace.” The image, like the others, is very striking. It seems to denote perfect purity, mighty energy, ardent zeal, both the will and the power to trample down every form of strong defiant evil, all ability to defend His threatened or persecuted people, by crushing every cruel and determined foe.

(5) “*And His voice as the voice of many waters,*”—still so far like Dan. x. 6, “And the voice of His words like the voice of a multitude,”—more like Ezek. xliii. 2, “The glory of the God of Israel came from the east: and His voice was like the sound of many waters.” How grand the likeness! The voice as well as the eye, the look, the gait, gives expression to the spirit and character of a man. Here we have a mighty voice, as the voice of God, as the roar of the ocean, the sound of many waters. How fitted to command! How resistless when commanding!

5. “*And He had in His hand seven stars; and out of His mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword; and His countenance (was) as the sun shining in his strength.*”

(1) “And He had in His hand seven stars.” The hand is the emblem of power. In chap. ii. 1 He is said to hold them in His right hand. They are completely in His power. He can keep them in safety. He can hold them up or cast them down. As we shall afterwards find, they represent the ministry of the Christian Church,—all subordinate to Him, all doing His will and work, all serving Him who is the true Minister of the House of God.

(2) “*And out of His mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword.*” In Isa. xlix. 2 we have, as the words of Christ, “He hath made My mouth like a sharp sword,”—almost the same figure. So Eph. vi. 17, “The sword of the Spirit, which is the

Word of God"; and Heb. iv. 12, "The Word of God is quick and powerful (R.V. living and active), and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart." From chap. ii. 16, we may learn how this sword may be used: "Repent, therefore; or else I will come to thee quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth." And again, chap. xix. 15, 21, "And out of His mouth proceedeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations," and "the rest were killed with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse, (even the sword) which came forth out of His mouth."

We naturally think of a sword coming out of the mouth of Jesus as simply the Word of God, the Word of Truth, and further of its power as affecting the mind, conscience and heart of him who hears, and thus as fitted to create rather than to destroy life. In this Book, however, it seems to suggest for the most part a deadly weapon, a power wielded against all who persist in sin or in rebellion against Christ. Alford infers from the fact, that the Rider on the white horse is called "The Word of God," that the symbol should be taken in its widest sense, and not with an exclusive punitive reference. This seems reasonable; and yet the main use of the sword in this Book is that of a destructive character, the sword of judicial authority and power. It implies the highest power of God, "who speaks and it is done, who commands and it stands fast." It befits Him who rules the nations, and has even to chastise His own people. As Jesus wields no material weapon, but simply and effectually commands, this symbol may serve as a key to chap. xi. 5, "If any man desireth to hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies." Whether for weal or for woe, all must be accomplished which proceedeth out of the mouth of God, of Christ, of any true prophet or Divinely inspired Man.

(3) "*And His countenance (was) as the sun shining in his strength.*" Peter, James and John had witnessed the Transfiguration of Jesus, when (Matt. xvii. 2) "His face did shine as the sun." The face or countenance is most highly expressive of the character of a man, and is thus a fit symbol of the inner man. To have a face, then, like the sun, is to be a most glorious and excellent Being. Hence the name of Jesus, "The Sun of Righteousness." Hence, too, the expressive words, "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

The God shines through the man—all majesty and mercy, all goodness and grace, all power and perfection, all combined excellence, Divine and human, may be viewed as thus belonging to Jesus Christ.

6. "*And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; I am the First and the Last, and the Living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and of Hades.*"

(1) "*And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead.*" Such was the effect of this awful and impressive vision. So it was with Daniel and the corresponding vision. It might be supposed that the very thought of the presence of his beloved Master and exalted Lord must have produced such an effect on John. However, his emotions were those of awe and fear, if not of terror. From the nature of the vision, as well as from the words "fear not," we may infer the correctness of this. Not till Christ had spoken did John seem to recognise Him.

(2) "*And He laid His right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; I am the First and the Last, and the Living One.*" This touch was with power. It renewed consciousness, and assured of safety. We have a counterpart to all this in the like vision of Daniel. In the words which follow, Jesus does what no Daniel could do: He identifies Himself with Jehovah, the self-existent and all-glorious God and King of Israel,—"*The First and the Last and the Living One,*"—words again and again used of Jehovah in the Book of Isaiah, as they are in this Book of Jesus. Jehovah, viewed in Himself or as One with Jesus Christ, is the only absolutely Living One or self-existing and therefore eternally existing God, the All-in-all of the universe.

(3) "*And I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore.*" This implies His human as well as His Divine nature, and alludes to His life no less than to His death. The Incarnation and the Crucifixion are alike full of mystery, and yet of reality. They and the Resurrection are the three greatest facts in this world's history. On them that history, with all its most awful and most blessed issues, hangs. The words "And I was or became dead" would bring John once more face to face with the cross. He would remember the awful darkness, the apparent eclipse of the Sun of righteousness. Hence the fine allusion to the glorious resurrection and the endless life. "*And behold, I am alive for evermore.*" In His immortality, thus beautifully

announced, we find the ground of the like immortality of all His people. Hence His words, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

(4) "*And have the keys of Death and of Hades.*" Here the Revised Version is greatly to be preferred. The keys symbolise power and authority. So "the key of David"; and so "the keys of the kingdom." Not right alone, or might alone; but right and might combined. The keys belong to Christ in virtue of His self-sacrificing and propitiatory death. How glorious a right and power they symbolise! He used them Himself, in His own death and resurrection,—"I have power," including "authority," "to lay down My life and to take it again" (John x. 18). "The gates of Hades" could not prevail against Him, so as to prevent His return to life and to the visible world. Nor can they prevail against His people. Till He opens, no being, no power can force them in or through the gate of death; and when, in His own good time, He is pleased to open, no being, no power can keep them from issuing through the gate of resurrection.

How vast and grand the power thus claimed—claimed over the living and the dead, the visible and the invisible worlds! No power can be compared with this. How cheering to all His people thus to know in what friendly hands are the keys of their present life and eternal destiny! They cannot die and thus enter the gate of Hades without His permission or command. They cannot remain in the state of the dead, in Hades, in Sheol, in the intermediate state, longer than His perfect will may determine. Glorious Redeemer! Conqueror of the greatest foes of the human race, sin and death! In Thine own Person Thou hast triumphed, yet in our behalf! In Thy death the death of Thy people is past! They live with Thee and like Thee for evermore! This death and resurrection of Jesus may be here specially contemplated as fitting Him to be the Head of the truly universal Church, the Church in heaven and the Church on earth, one and the same Church in and through Him, or with Him as the one and only glorious Head.

7. "*Write therefore the things which thou sawest, and the things which are, and the things which shall come to pass after these. The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in My right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks: The seven stars are the angels of the seven Churches; and the seven candlesticks are the seven Churches.*"

(1) Here we have a renewal of the command to write. In verse 11 it was simply said, "What thou seest write." Here

we have "What thou sawest or hast seen write"; implying some advance in the unveiling. Perhaps we cannot with certainty define the three classes of things here referred to. After all that has been said, we seem led to accept the idea of those who regard them as, *first*, those things just seen in vision; *secondly*, those pertaining to the seven Churches already alluded to and about to be expressly addressed; and, *thirdly*, those regarding the whole future of the Church according as this might be successively revealed, at least in symbol, to the Apostle.

(2) "*The mystery of the seven stars,*" etc. The punctuation of the Authorised and Revised Versions would suggest that this clause is in apposition,—"*the mystery,*" accusative, governed by the verb to write. So some regard it. The better view seems that according to which it is treated as a nominative absolute. The speaker is led to explain what otherwise would remain a mystery, a secret, a symbol of uncertain, if not unintelligible, import, and thus leave the reader of the Book in ignorance of very much of its meaning. That this is the right view of the words seems evident from this, that the explanation immediately follows. "*The mystery, the mystic meaning, the spiritual import of the stars and candlesticks,*"—"is this," as might have been added, or as may be regarded as understood, to complete the sentence, though by no means needed, as the tone in which the words were uttered would show their force.

(3) "*The seven stars are the angels of the seven Churches; and the seven candlesticks are the seven Churches.*"

a. We need not say that these words, especially the first clause, have led to much controversy. The candlesticks, indeed, are expressly said to be or to represent the Churches whose part it is to hold up and hold forth the light of heaven. Christ Himself is the True Light; and, just in proportion as He dwells in and shines through such communities, can they be thus rightly symbolised. This is hardly the place to treat of the nature and constitution of these or of all Apostolic Churches, unless in so far as they are set forth in this Book. Thus, in regard to their proper membership, we may safely say that they ought to consist of genuine Christians, or, to give them their Apocalyptic name, true Israelites: that is to say, a Christian church is just a church of Christians; whilst, again, Christians are just those in whom Christ lives through that "faith which works by love, which purifies the heart, and which overcomes the world." With respect also to the mutual relationship of these churches, and so

of all rightly constituted churches, we seem to have here a not uncertain light. They are not to resemble the nation of Israel, symbolised by the one seven-branched candlestick, but, as already indicated, to consist of many separate, and, if we may so say, self-contained communities, each a candlestick, which is certainly an object at once separate and complete in itself. However they may unite or be combined for good and legitimate ends, they have no external or visible bond of union, far less have they any one external and visible head.

The real Divine and invisible Head is here clearly, though symbolically, set before our eyes. He is in the midst of all. He is over all. He is the one and only bond uniting all. We do not say that they may not all live in harmony, co-operate freely, and appear as one grand and united community; but we do say that, to be Apocalyptic and therefore Scriptural, they must have no common and visible head. They must allow no human being or order of human beings to take, or rather to usurp, the place of Him who is here set forth as the One and Only Head of the Universal Church. If this symbolical representation is to be realised, as it was in these early days, and as, according to this Book, it is destined to be again and for ever realised, we must have no Papal Head and no Royal Head over the whole or over any portion of these Churches of Jesus Christ. Each must be a separate candlestick—each must have its separate star—all the stars must be in the hand and so under the control of no pope, no king, no human ruler, but in the hand and under the control of Christ and Christ alone. No Church has a right to put itself under any other. No Church has a right to put itself under the control of any king or parliament or state or governing body, any more than under any pope claiming to be universal bishop and vicar of Jesus Christ. How far, in harmony with this Book, Churches may be Independent and Congregational, Presbyterian, Episcopal, or of mixed constitution, we may not be able to learn. For this, and for very much else, we must consult other portions of sacred Scripture.

b. But, what of the stars here called the angels of the Churches? Here the difficulty arises from the fact that the symbol is but partially explained. Here alone in the New Testament do we find the expression “the angels of the churches,” one symbol apparently being used, not fully to interpret, but as helpful towards the interpretation of the other. Nor is this by any means inconsistent with Apocalyptic method. Thus, in

chap xi. 8, we find "the great city," in whose "street" "the dead bodies" of the two witnesses lay, is called "Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified,"—one symbol to be deciphered by the aid of three other symbols. This was not in vain or insufficient. They all throw light on each other, and so conduce to the intended explanation.

So here, the symbols of the star and of the angel combine towards their common interpretation. The star fitly represents a ruling power as well as a source of light; an angel as fitly symbolises some Divine or heavenly agent or agency. The name means one sent, a messenger, usually of God or from heaven. Some, accordingly, would suppose a literal angel, as of individual Christians or of Christian Churches. So Jesus speaks of the angels of certain little ones beholding the face of His Father. So, again, the angels which are said in Daniel to be over certain nations. Such angels here would represent the Churches. (Alford has said all that can be well said in favour of this.) However, we cannot suppose the seven epistles addressed to such. The person or persons, then, on the one hand symbolised as stars, must be of ruling power and enlightening influence in the Churches or connected with them, and on the other symbolised as angels, must be regarded as in some high sense sent of God or messengers of heaven. We cannot suppose them to correspond with the messengers of the synagogue, whose office was too low to be so grandly symbolised. High rank and office must be implied. Hence many insist on the idea of bishops in the highest sense of the term, not as it is everywhere used in the New Testament, synonymous with presbyter or elder, but as it afterwards came to be used, and as it is used in the present day—namely, the highest of the three orders of bishops, presbyters, and deacons.

Whilst it is admitted that the names, bishops and presbyters, are used interchangeably in the New Testament, it is maintained that it is here proved that, before the close of the apostolic age, one of these officers had been raised to the supremacy over all the rest and over the Church of which they were rulers, and so exclusively received the title of bishop, the others retaining the name of presbyters or elders alone. This great change is here for the first time indicated and proved by the use of what is deemed the directly explanatory term angel. Such is the argument. Once it was deemed absolutely invincible. Now it is more than beginning to be abandoned. The identity of bishops

and presbyters is now fully acknowledged by the best episcopal interpreters of the New Testament. Nor can they put weight on so doubtful an inference from such a purely symbolical usage.

In this Book, angels are everywhere used for Divine agents or agencies; and such clearly appears to be the usage here. We take the stars and the angels, then, to be symbolical of one and the same Divine agency, what we have already called the ruling and enlightening powers of these Christian Churches. What the name or names, and what the real character of these powers, we cannot find here, but must learn from what we find clearly and unmistakably said of them throughout the entire New Testament. They are there usually spoken of as two and not three classes—bishops or presbyters, and deacons. For our present purpose, we shall unite them under the one name of the ministry of the apostolic churches. This ministry or agency is to be regarded as that of a kingdom not of this world, the kingdom of heaven, and therefore Divine and heavenly, and thus most fitly symbolised, whether by stars in the hand of Christ or by angels or messengers of God.

This might be illustrated by Mal. ii. 4—7, in which we seem to find quite a parallel case. We are first told of a covenant with Levi, the priestly tribe, the entire sacerdotal ministry of Israel; and then we have these words: “For the priest’s lips”—the lips of the entire priesthood, not of any one priest, not even of the high priest alone—“should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he”—the priest, every priest, the whole priesthood, the entire sacerdotal ministry—“is the messenger,” “is the angel,” “of the Lord of hosts.” Well, then, may the ministry of a Church of Christ, a part of the kingdom of heaven, be in like manner called by the same name of messenger or angel of God. As the High Priest was simply included in the one ministry, the bishop or bishops may well be conceived to be simply included in the other. We may add, that all this consists far more correctly with what is said of the star and angel, both here and in the following epistles, than could any exclusive reference to any one officer, even a bishop. Thus the whole ministry is surely to be viewed as in the hand of the Head of the Church.

The whole ministry, too, is far more truly representative of a church than any one supreme ruler could be. Nor is this all. The angel is really identified with the Church, and not merely

spoken of as simply representative of it, in the seven epistles. Angel and Church are ever praised or censured as if one and the same responsible agent or agency. If a supreme ruler were alone intended, surely we might expect, in some one instance at least, to find him praised and the people censured, or the contrary. This invariable identification suggests a still larger view of the representative character of the star and angel,—even that of the entire Church itself, with its bishops and deacons, viewed in fact, and as it is again and again shown to be in the New Testament, as at once a governed and governing or self-governing body. The ministry was elected by the Church; nor did election lead to exclusively ministerial administration. The church retained even the supreme and final power in much pertaining to discipline and the like. By the votes of the people, we are expressly told, members were excluded; and this clearly implies that by them members were admitted. Thus, as we have said, each Church was complete in itself; self-governing or self-governed.

Nor does this by any means imply, as has been too often supposed, that it was a pure and unmixed democracy. It was no such thing. It was rather a pure unmixed Theocracy, or, as the symbolic vision represents, a pure unmixed Christocracy. In a democracy the people claim all right to alter their laws, their institutions, their rulers,—to make their own will their own law. It is not so with the Christian people. They have one King, even Christ, and one law, even His will. Their officers, though elected by them, are elected not to do their will or their own will, but the will of Christ, nor even to offices determined or modified by the elective power, but appointed by the common Head. Nor are the members to fix their own duties or to modify their own offices, but to act according to the law of Christ. The Church, as here symbolised, is a purely spiritual body, all one in Christ, all seeking to know and do the will of Christ, and all occupying the places and fulfilling the duties prescribed by Christ. The office-bearers are the ministers or servants of the people for Jesus' sake; but the people are not the masters of their officers, but obedient to them for the sake of the same Blessed One; all being thus free, loving and submissive brethren, friends and servants one of another; all seeking to do the one will of Christ, and all, by so doing, illustrating the words of Jesus, "One is your Master, and ye are brethren."

8. Such, then, is the wonderful revelation of Jesus Christ as

the Head and Ruler of His own people; and now, before proceeding further with our exposition, we may add the following, which may be of use as a recapitulation on the one hand, and as showing the importance of this chapter in its relation to the entire Book.

(1) We have been led to contemplate the one Kingdom and the many Churches of Jesus Christ. We deem it well to keep in view this fact, that, whilst the former is directly described as one, the latter are symbolically represented as many. Of course, all these may be viewed, as they are elsewhere spoken of, as making up one Church—"the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." However, the representation here given is, we are persuaded, peculiarly suitable. We cannot overestimate the value of the clear and simple idea of the kingdom, as here set forth, or as made up of Christ the Redeemer-King and all whom He has loosed from their sins and made priests unto God and His Father. Such was His kingdom then; such it is now; and such it will continue for ever to be. It is one; and it cannot but be one. As Jesus taught Nicodemus, it can be seen or entered only by a new, a spiritual and heavenly birth; or, as men are ushered, by natural birth, into the kingdoms of the world, so they are, by spiritual birth, into the kingdom of heaven. Many may thus be true subjects of it, who may be no members of any Church. Nay, only by thus being real subjects of the former do they become fit members of the latter. Just in proportion as the members of a Church are true and faithful subjects of the kingdom, is that Church Christian and well-pleasing to Christ. For, what is a Christian Church but simply a Church of Christians?

In too many minds the Church and Kingdom are one and the same. What we have said may clearly show that this is by no means the case. Many may be subjects of the one and not members of the other. Millions have been members of the latter and not subjects of the former. The Kingdom is always real, and cannot perish. Churches may become corrupt, unreal - nay, worldly, pagan, anti-Christian, and utterly unworthy of the name; though we have, most assuredly, the word of Christ that the entire Church will not at any time cease to be. Sadly, it must be added, we shall find that, true as this must be, the real Church was destined almost to disappear. When Churches become corrupt, the subjects of the Kingdom may have to withdraw, and to form themselves into other Churches, if they can, or to be

alone as simply subjects of the Kingdom, if they cannot. All this will be seen as we treat of the seven epistles.

(2) We seem to have said enough of the sole supreme Headship of Christ. He must have no substitute and no rival, pope, king, archbishop, or any other, ecclesiastical or political. He must be the Head of each Church apart, as well as of all Churches united. Almost everywhere and at all times Christians have been too ready to exalt external uniformity, at the expense of real unity. The former must ultimately have its pope or universal bishop: the latter is satisfied with, as it can alone be supported by, the presence of the only true Bishop of souls. Uniformity has actually been fully developed; and history tells us that it means despotism and death.

→ The unity, for which Christ prayed, and which all Christians ought to seek, means Christ in every heart, Christ all in all in the Church, Christ with His abundant life and liberty. This unity lives and reigns amidst the richest and most beautiful diversity. In fact, unity in diversity is the law of the kingdom of nature, and cannot but be the law of the kingdom of grace. Let → no Church of sincere Christians, however small, and however differing from other Churches, be despised. Let Christ's own words be remembered, "Where two or three are met together in My name, there am I in the midst of them," as in the midst of the golden candlesticks. Let all Churches honouring the common Head be honoured by all Churches. Let all Christians love all Christians, to whatever Churches they may be attached. Then, in proportion as Christ's special law of love is thus obeyed, the unity of His Church will be realised and the truth of His mission demonstrated.

(3) Jesus, we should note, revealed Himself to John in that very character, in which He appears as Lord of both worlds, and as best fitted to be the Living Head of the one kingdom of the redeemed in heaven as well as on earth. In studying this Book we cannot too carefully keep in view the simple fact that the kingdom of grace and of glory is one and the same kingdom; so that Christians are described as those who dwell in heaven, and others as those who dwell on the earth. In harmony with this, and most suitably to it, we have found Jesus saying of Himself, "I am the First and the Last, and the Living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and of Hades." Thus is He, in His glorious Person, ever present with His people in heaven, and, in His

↪ Divine Spirit, always and everywhere with all His people on earth. (As Divine, and therefore in the very highest sense, He has never really left this world, departed from His Church, or ceased to walk amidst the golden candlesticks. Christians have by far too little believed and realised the truth of this; and hence much weakness where there would have been great strength, and much sadness where there would have been mighty consolation. Christians would have known better what it is to live and reign with Christ on earth, even now, and ever since His Gospel, His very name, became a power among mankind.)

(4) Whilst union with Christ forms the real bond of union ↪ among Christians, or whilst His true kingdom is wherever He is, so that, to enter His kingdom, we have simply to receive the King, we are here reminded of the real sum of all that truth, which Christians are supposed to know and profess in order to mutual recognition and to their rightful formation into a Church of Christ. We refer to "the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost," here expressed in different terms,—“of Him which is and which was and which is to come, and of the seven Spirits which are before His throne, and of Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, the Firstborn of the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth.” Taking the latter as equivalent to the former, we take both to involve all the truth just referred to. For, in making that great Name, the all which Christians profess in baptism, and in order to due and rightful entrance into His own Church, Christ appears, in these sublime words, to have given what we may call the whole essential creed of that Church of all ages and in every land. Let union to Christ, and therefore ↪ to the Father and to the Holy Spirit, form the one and only condition of membership, and gradually and ultimately all Churches worthy of the name will appear in all their true and intended unity, though there may always and everywhere obtain as to the less central truths no small amount of diverse judgment and belief. Let all seek to know all Christian truth, and to act in keeping with it; but let none demand such doctrinal agreement ↪ as must separate those whom Christ would unite in fellowship as a Church.

(5) We would now only add, that we need not go beyond this chapter to find the most ample evidence of the truth of the assurance,—“Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things which are written therein.” How blessed to enjoy all the grace and peace which

flow so richly and so constantly to all who believe, from Father, Son and Holy Spirit! How blessed to enjoy living and holy union and fellowship with Him who was dead and now lives for evermore! How blessed to form a part of that Divine and heavenly kingdom, of which Christ is the glorious, almighty, all-loving, and immortal Head! How blessed to know that this and the kingdom of glory in heaven are one and the same kingdom, which cannot be moved, within which no one can ever really die, and which it is the delight and the glory of the ever-blessed God to form and to perfect as His own peculiar and infinitely precious treasure! How blessed to meditate day and night on Him who, in boundless love, has loosed us from our sins by His own blood, and who possesses all those powers and perfections here so wonderfully set forth as if before our very eyes! How blessed to share, not only prospectively in His blessedness and glory in heaven, but now and actually in His delightful and self-perfecting service on earth, and in His own great work of raising mankind from the depths of sin and woe, to glory, honour and immortality!

II.

CHAPTERS II., III.

EPISTLES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES.

1. IN Chap. I. we have been led to contemplate the great Royal High Priest or Redeemer-King as having formed His own redeemed people into a kingdom of priests to His God and Father, and as being the living Centre and governing Head of that people viewed as organised into many Churches represented by the seven Churches to which these epistles are addressed. This kingdom we found to be one and only one, whether on earth or in heaven, and to be made up of all the really twice-born children of God or the truly sincere and faithful subjects of Jesus Christ. These subjects are supposed to form themselves into Christian Societies or Churches wherever the Gospel is preached and men become the disciples of Christ. These Churches may be viewed as making up one universal Church, and as also called the Kingdom of Christ, yet not in the more restricted sense in which we have just used the words. This Church or Kingdom may be entered and has been entered by many who have no right to enter, who are no real subjects of the King, and who, as Christ expressly said, shall in the end be separated from His true people.

In these epistles the Head of the Church universal, represented by these seven separate and independent communities, appears as acting in keeping with the vision of the golden candlesticks, and thus as in every way promoting their well-being and governing, or dealing with them according to their ever-changing character and conduct. In this way these epistles present, to the minds of Christians of every time and land, the unseen, but all-seeing, Head of the Church, carrying on His great work in this world, and practically teaching the members of all Churches

in what light they are viewed by their Saviour and King and Judge, and how they may expect His approbation, protection and aid, or look for His chastisement or even final condemnation. This is of vast importance to all who would seek their own good, the good of their fellow-Christians, or the stability, the progress and glory of the kingdom of heaven. Ample encouragement and most salutary warning are given. The case of every one is wonderfully met. In reading and pondering, we are made to feel as if listening to the very voice of Jesus—nay, as under the spell of His penetrating eye, and as if asked, like Peter, “*Lovest thou Me?*”

2. Whilst these three opening chapters may be viewed as an introduction, and to some extent a key, to the entire Book; and whilst these epistles, breathing the pure spirit of Jesus Himself, are thus highly instructive and most impressive, we may specially learn from them, not only the general state and character of these and such-like early Churches, but the real nature, the true ideal, of all thoroughly Christian Churches,—Churches such as Christ intended to exist, and such as enjoy His approbation, and may be assured of that prosperity which His presence and blessing can alone secure. All this we may learn by carefully observing all that He commends and all that He condemns. By separating the latter from the former, we can form to ourselves a clear, consistent and complete idea of a truly Christian, and, we may say, a model Church. This idea will enable us to bring all Churches, in which we may be interested, to the test of Scripture rule, and to judge as to how far they rise towards their full height of prosperity, or sink below it.

All Churches can thus more or less correctly judge themselves. The words of Christ will reveal to us the real character of these Churches. They will give to our minds a clear discernment of the nature and extent of that fearful perversion and corruption which this Book has, with unerring exactness, prophetically depicted. They will enable us rightly to appreciate that terrible contrast between the Church, viewed as the wife of the Lamb, and what she actually became, the anti-Christian Church, the paganised Church, corrupted herself, and corrupting even the nations of the world. They will enable us also to anticipate the grand restoration of the Churches to their highest apostolic purity and power, when Christ shall be exalted, and when His Gospel shall everywhere mightily prevail.

I. THE EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS.

Rev. ii. 1-7.

"To the angel of the Church in Ephesus write:—These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, He that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks: I know thy works, and thy toil and patience, and that thou canst not bear them that are evil, and didst try them who call themselves Apostles, and they are not, and didst find them false; and thou hast patience and didst bear for My name's sake, and hast not grown weary. But I have (this) against thee, that thou hast left thy first love. Remember, therefore, from whence thou hast fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches. To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the Paradise of God."

1. *"To the angel of the Church in Ephesus write."*

(1) We shall not say much regarding this celebrated city, whose temple and worship of Diana, and whose trade and commerce, made it well known throughout the Roman world. The chief city of Ionia and capital of Proconsular Asia, it shared largely in the abundant and successful labours of the Apostle Paul. Here he toiled, as only he could toil; and so built up a most prosperous Church, as to which we find him tenderly saying "By the space of three years I ceased not to admonish every one night and day with tears." The instructions of so long a period, enjoyed by people of earnest, active mind, issued in a high degree of Christian intelligence. Paul's epistle to this Church is written in a style, and with such a depth and reach of thought, as only such a Church could appreciate. At Miletus, when he met the bishops or presbyters—for the same persons are called by both names—he most faithfully warned them of evils which would yet trouble them, nay, which would arise from among themselves, "I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the people after them." Paul was more afraid of the bishops than of the people. Ignatius was more afraid of the people than of the bishops. Who showed the profounder knowledge? The history of centuries clearly and fearfully decides.

(2) We have treated the angels of the Churches as no real

angels on the one hand, and as no mere names of bishops on the other; but as fitly symbolising, along with the stars, the entire ruling and teaching agency or ministry of these Churches, and so of all other rightly constituted Churches. Of what class or classes of men this ministry consisted we must learn from the other parts of the New Testament. We have said that, to give full force to the words in these epistles which identify the angels with the Churches, we seem led to include the administrative agency or ministry of the entire Church; so that the Church, viewed as governed, would be symbolised by the candlestick or lampstand; whilst viewed as self-governing, it would be represented by the star or angel. This idea we would not press. The general idea of the ruling and teaching ministry we would fully maintain.

2. "*These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.*" Here and in the other epistles we find Christ making self-descriptive use of the first vision, in order that He may the more appropriately address the Churches according to the state and character of each. To this Church He presents Himself, not only as having, but also as holding fast, the seven stars, and not only as standing, but also as walking, in the midst of the candlesticks. The former He holds in safe keeping and under full control; the latter He keeps under perfect and constant review. He has something very serious to say to the ministry, represented by the star, with respect to the people, represented by the candlestick; and therefore He reminds both of His relation to them and His absolute power over them.

3. "*I know thy works, and thy toil and patience.*" The first clause does not necessarily imply commendation, but might rather express the perfect knowledge or even suggest the Omniscience, of the Speaker, viewed as the Judge of all, and therefore as the Searcher of all hearts. Still, as connected with what immediately follows, we seem required to regard these works in a favourable light. They had toiled in His service, and nobly and patiently waited upon Himself. They had not been idle: they had done real work. He gave them no faint praise.

4. "*And that thou canst not bear them that are evil, and didst try them who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and didst find them false.*"

(1) "*Ye that love God, hate evil,*" is a most important rule of life. God and sin are opposite poles of right and wrong, of good

and evil, of happiness and misery, of glory and shame. The One we are to love, and the other we are to hate, with our whole heart,—we cannot possibly conceive how greatly the One is worthy of love, or the other of hatred. Still we must not do what God never does : in our hatred of his sin, we must not hate the sinner. Perhaps the best test of our own sincerity in so doing will be found in this,—that of all sins we most intensely hate our own. Here it is not said “thou hatest,” but “thou canst not bear them that are evil.” We may assume that that intolerance of mere external evil, which so often betrays a hard and proud heart, and which could merit no praise, is not here intended ; but simply that noble and manly spirit which cannot endure the sight of wrong-doing without expressing disapprobation of the wrong-doer, whilst grieved with him and desirous of his repentance. This supposed, we have here a further note of praise.

(2) Such, too, we deem the words which follow. In his first Epistle, John had himself given this important counsel (ch. iv. 1) : “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God : because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” In “The Teaching of the Apostles,” too—a book somewhat recently discovered, and supposed to have been written not long after the Apocalypse—we are informed of the way in which such used to be judged by the Churches, we cannot say altogether spiritually and satisfactorily. What John commends, this Church appears to have wisely and faithfully done. Here the persons spoken of are called apostles, whilst John calls them prophets. Both names suppose a Divine commission. We need not suppose that they put themselves on a level with the Twelve, but they would boast of such a commission. Their teachings, not unlikely their spirit and manner of life, would be brought to the test of the Gospel ; and, being found inconsistent with it, would be rejected accordingly. As yet, all seems highly praise-worthy.

5. “*And thou hast patience, and didst bear for My name's sake, and hast not grown weary.*” This is no mere repetition. The former commendation was that of “patient continuance in well-doing.” This was rather that of patient endurance of reproach, of wrong, of persecution, for the sake of the blessed, but despised and hated name of Christ. These Ephesians had thus earned the blessedness of “the persecuted for righteousness sake.” They seem not to have grudged or complained. With faithful, noble spirit, they stood fast, and “did not grow weary.”

How far they may have begun to relax, we are not told. If no more had been added, they would have appeared a highly Christian people, noble and stout-hearted confessors, with all the freshness of vigorous youth, and comparable to the strongest and most prosperous Churches of the present day. Yet, to the clear eye of Jesus, there was something lamentably wrong.

6. "*But I have (this) against thee, that thou hast left thy first love.*"

(1) Jesus judges, not according to appearance, but according to the heart. In earlier times, He had seen in the hearts of this people such intense and overflowing love to God and to Himself as could not fail to give truest satisfaction. As has been often said, it was as the love of the bride for the bridegroom. Such love Jesus would prize as the very return which He desired for His own immeasurable love. How sad to His heart the decay of this first and most precious love! He by no means complains of the loss or extinction of all love. We must not make the case worse than He Himself has made it. How vexed His spirit, when, seeing certain followers departing from Him, He turned to the chosen twelve, and said, "Will ye also go away?" So here. Decay tends and points to death; and, as He looked along the course of time, He saw the actual death of this Church following, if not flowing from, this sad decay.

(2) Some regard the love spoken of, rather as that to fellow-Christians, or brotherly love, than as that to Christ Himself. This is a great mistake, though we are far from thinking that it was not included. Mainly, we feel assured, love to Christ was meant. At the same time, first love to Christ is invariably accompanied with like love to Christians. This is in itself most natural; whilst Christians are taught to cherish this mutual love, by that new commandment of Christ, that they should love one another, even as He had loved them. Sometimes this very love may be found to exist and to flourish, even after love to Christ has begun to fade, and may appear to do so the more richly, because it may be succeeded by what may seem identical with it, —we mean that social affection or friendly spirit, which may be cherished by social intercourse, even after Christian love has well-nigh passed away.

(3) First love should always grow, and never decay. The longer the Christian lives, the more strongly, intensely and tenderly ought he to love his Lord and Saviour. It was so with the Apostle John. It has been so with many. It ought to be so

with all. Paul so thought ; and hence we find in his Epistle to this very Church one of the finest prayers which even he ever uttered, and which we can do no better than here quote in full (Eph. iii. 14--19) : " For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father, from whom the whole family in heaven and on earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inward man ; that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith ; to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God." If this Church had kept this prayer in view and acted accordingly, this complaint would never have been made, and an ever-growing prosperity would have been secured. The fervour and emotional glow of first love might not have continued or always been felt ; for this were inconsistent with the constitution of our moral and spiritual being. So true is this, that many, ignorant of that constitution, have believed that this complaint might justly be preferred against them, though their first love may, on the contrary, have been unconsciously, but really, ever waxing stronger and stronger, deeper and deeper, as they have continued humbly and faithfully to serve their Lord and Master. As emotional, it is less consciously felt. As a supreme and ruling principle, it is to be judged by the life to which it leads, and then it will be happily known to have suffered no real decay.

(4) The threatening which follows, of the removal of the candlestick, reminds us of two things. *First*, The decay of first love in the Christian or in the Christian Church may be punished in the decay of the entire spirit and character, or of the whole Christian manhood ; and, *secondly*, the rise of this love to its mature development may be regarded as the first and main condition of continued moral and spiritual health in the case of the individual, and of continued prosperity, nay, of continued existence, in the case of every Christian Church. We take this to be the most important lesson to be learned from this most instructive epistle. The Great Teacher would have all Christians, and Christian Churches to know that the best and surest way to rise towards the richest prosperity and the highest perfection, is to exalt Him, to give Him the whole heart, to cultivate this love by every form of loving obedience to Him and by close

and constant communion with Him. We repeat, Christ would here instruct all Christians and all Churches as to the real secret of their inward strength and outward prosperity.

(5) We are here reminded of the real beginning of all the evils which afflict the Church of Jesus Christ—even in the heart. In one sense, this is but another way of expressing what we have just said; only, put thus, it may serve to deepen our impression of one of the most important rules of all practical life: namely, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life,"—words of greatest reach, and which may include the grand rule of Christian life—namely, 'Keep thy heart in the love of God and of Jesus Christ.'

(6) We cannot tell the special cause or causes of this sad spiritual loss. Some one cause, as the indulgence of any sin, however small, might lead to it; simple neglect of proper culture might gradually bring it about. But, as the whole community, we do not say without exception, is here censured, we seem led to seek for some common cause; and possibly, along with such neglect, growing worldliness, not improbably due to growing worldly prosperity, may have, slowly and insensibly, as by an impure atmosphere, toned down the spiritual energies, and rendered the heart less susceptible of those sweet and secret influences by which the Holy Spirit feeds the very soul of every one who sincerely seeks His grace and submits himself to His new-creative power.

7. *"Remember therefore from whence thou hast fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent."*

(1) The complaint is followed by counsel, at once merciful and faithful. All Christians and all Churches may well magnify the forbearance of the Great Being with whom they have to do. How we all try that forbearance! This Church is called upon to repent. A great change of mind must take place. The evil, which may have been growing quite insensibly, and possibly for a considerable time, must be condemned and lamented. Its causes must be studied and shunned. The means or sources of revival must be sought. Prayer for renewing grace must abound. The great self-sacrificing love of Christ must be remembered. Every gift and grace must be stirred up. In whatever way, and at whatever expense, First Love must be restored.

(2) In order to this, the Church is called upon to do a most

important thing,—“remember whence thou hast fallen.” This loss of love is thus viewed as a mighty fall. How apt are we to think that no such fall can take place, unless through some great external sin! Christ knows and sees the greatest of all falls,—a fall from a high state of love to Himself. There He sees the fall of the whole man. There all works are changed: the external may seem the same, or even may look fairer and better than ever, but they have lost their lustre in the eyes of Christ. These Ephesian Christians are counselled to call to remembrance earlier times, how the fire of devotion once glowed, how they abounded in “works of faith and labours of love.” All was heart then. Jesus was all in all to them, and highly delighted in them. Now, He is wounded in this house of His friends. There, He clearly saw, He Himself was not what He once was. Let them well and earnestly ponder this, that they may be humbled and led to that “godly sorrow which worketh repentance not to be repented of.”

(3) They are counselled to “do their first works,”—those works which so freely and naturally flowed from abounding gratitude and glowing love to Jesus Christ. As they condemned themselves, confessed their sin, and sought and accepted forgiveness, their grateful love would begin to rise. They would start afresh in the Christian life. They would aim to do as they had once done. They would seek to make up for lost time and lost love. What they earnestly sought they would not fail to obtain. First love would doubtless return. At the same time, we fear, when once really lost, it is too rarely regained. “Repent, and do thy first works,” is the counsel of Jesus. It alone is wise and safe. We may add, that it suggests a fundamental law of all Christian progress—namely, that we must not only accept Christ, and continue to meditate on His great love, that we may possess, and cherish our love to Him, but must also and above all things, lovingly, devotedly, nay, enthusiastically, consecrate ourselves to His service, and make that service our whole work, our constant work, our most honourable and delightful work, the work of our whole heart and soul and strength. Then shall our first love be very far from being our finest love. Then shall we grow in all Christian manhood. Then shall every virtue be unfolded, and every vice suppressed. Let us never forget that the growth of love depends more on what it does than on what it receives. This is widely and most variously illustrated in common life. The parent does more for the child than the child for the parent;

the parent loves the child more than the child loves the parent. If any one child costs more care and service, nay, more anxiety and trouble, than the other children, that child is sure to have the largest share of the parental heart. So, generally at least, in the case of masters and servants. However alike faithful, he who serves is sure to grow in love to his master, as the latter, pleased and even grateful as he may be, cannot grow in love to him. The man who does most for Christ will come to love Christ more than those who may meditate much on His love, but do less for Himself. So long as young Christians ardently pray and work that the kingdom of Christ may advance, their "love never fails." Their work fills their hearts, not only with itself, but with Jesus Christ. Their hearts are enlarged and strengthened and intensified. Let their heads and hands begin to weary of well-doing, and their hearts will begin to beat with feebler pulse. Assured as we are that Mary, at that special time, did more to feed the flame of holy love, by opening her receptive soul to the breathing words of Jesus, than did Martha, by her really good and careful endeavours most hospitably to serve Him, yet, we may be also assured that if, after His departure, Mary had continued rather to contemplate than to work, whilst Martha persevered in working rather than in meditation, the oft-repeated words would have applied,—*"There are first that shall be last, and last that shall be first."* From all this, let us learn how deep and far-reaching is the saying of Jesus,—*"It is more blessed to give than to receive."* Christ gave the wisest and best advice,—*"Repent, and do thy first works,"* if thou wouldst return to thy first love.

(4) The call to repentance was an encouragement to hope. We might view the awful threatening which follows in the same light,—*"Else I will come to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent."* How beautiful, and, as just said, encouraging, this *"except thou repent"*! How often and how kindly does God, from end to end of Scripture, assure all, even the most displeasing to Himself, that nothing but *impenitence* can lead to final condemnation. The words do not mean the removal of the Church from Ephesus to some other place. Nor do they merely mean the further decay of the light and love of Divine grace. They imply nothing short of the extinction of the Church itself. Churches may be truly said to live by the heart, to die by the heart, to rise or fall with the state of the heart. For a time the body of a Church may remain after

its soul has departed. Like that of Sardis, it may have a name that it lives, though it is dead. But, this cannot continue. The Ever-coming One, as He here threatens, will come. The candlestick must be removed. Under this threatening, He has a word for all Churches. He virtually announces a great law of His kingdom, that the life and prosperity of a Church depends upon the love of its members to Himself and to one another. Whether this Church truly repented or not, we do not know. It did continue to exist, and externally at least to prosper, for a long time after this date. Still, at last the candlestick was removed. Not only is it no longer to be seen there; but the famous city in which it was placed has long ago been removed also. The ruins, which remain, form a poor memento of its existence, and utterly fail to tell of its glory.

8. "*But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.*"

(1) It has been well and often said that Christ here shows great kindness in thus adding this word of approbation. He has against them one thing: He has for them another. The latter could not counterbalance the former. Still, allusion to it was fitted to prevent despondency and to quicken confidence and love. It was specially cheering to add, "which I also hate"; as thus He hinted at one real bond of union, that of sympathy with Him in the hatred of evil—a hatred which, we may safely believe, implied the existence of the precious and noble love of good. It had already been said, to the honour of this Church, that they could not bear them that are evil. Here, a special example of this is expressly given. They rightly hated the works of the Nicolaitans.

(2) Who or what were these? They have usually been supposed to have been an early sect of heretics, whose doctrines were fearfully erroneous, and whose practices were peculiarly vile. By some they were held to have been disciples of the Deacon "Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch." For this, or for anything unworthy of this Nicolas, we have no real authority. The mere name seems to have suggested the idea of origin. One, who may have maintained the highest character, seems thus to have been branded with the infamy of apostasy on the one hand, and of the most loathsome wickedness on the other. The authority of Irenæus, indeed, has been deemed decisive. Let us quote his words. Book I. Chap. xxvi. 3.—"The Nicolaitans are the followers of Nicolas, who was one of the seven first ordained to

the diaconate by the Apostles. They lead lives of unrestrained indulgence. The character of these men is very plainly pointed out in the Apocalypse of John [where they are represented] as teaching that it is a matter of indifference to practise adultery, and to eat things sacrificed to idols. Wherefore the Lord has also spoken of them thus : ' But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.' " All this would seem clearly to prove that Irenæus got all his knowledge of the supposed sect from the Apocalypse, and that he knew no more of the persons here referred to than we may from the same source. Any sect, of such a character, if actually existing, may have been called by this name, even though of no historical connection with those who, we are persuaded, formed no actual sect, and were here simply and descriptively called by the mystical name of Nicolaitans.

As John again and again gives both Hebrew and Greek names to the same persons or things, he is supposed here to have formed a Greek word, which would mark them out as like those who were seduced by the wicked and delusive teachings of Balaam. As suggested by the epistle to the Church in Pergamum, these Nicolaitans might be called Balaamites. They breathed the same spirit and sanctioned the same practices. That they formed an organised sect, either within or without the Christian Church, we more than doubt. Alford is strongly opposed to the idea of the name being formed as just suggested ; contending that the Balaamites and Nicolaitans are proved to be different by verses 14 and 15, to which again Archbishop Trench appeals as sufficient proof of identity. He says, " In the first place the names are by no means parallel, even if we were to make Balaam, as some have done, בַּלַּעַם, lord of the people ('Αρχέλαος) ; and next the view derives no support from verse 14, where the followers of Balaam are distinct from the Nicolaitans . . . and besides, there is no sort of reason for interpreting the name otherwise than historically. . . . If we do not gain trustworthy accounts of the sect elsewhere, why not allow for the gulf which separates the history of the apostolic from that of the post-apostolic period ? "

Here we find acknowledged all that want of historical authority, in virtue of which we have rejected the idea of Nicolas, the Deacon, being the founder of such a sect. We do not think Alford correct with regard to the question of identity. The meaning seems to be not by any means that they were, or could be, really

identical, but simply that the Nicolaitans were to the Christian Church what the Balaamites were to ancient Israel. But there was no organised party in the case of Israel; and why think of an organised sect in the case of the Christian Church? It seems quite enough for us to suppose that corruption, both religious and moral, had in some way been introduced from the surrounding pagan world—introduced, it may have been, by persons seemingly converted to Christ, and yet bringing along with them the lax or erroneous views of early education, or by persons who failed to keep at a safe distance from their pagan neighbours, and who thus grew lax and compliant with the religious customs and morals, or, rather, immoral practices, around them.

However, we would by no means refuse the idea of the existence and pernicious influence of the Gnostic sects which arose and did much mischief at this early period. At all times the Church of Christ is exposed to the influences of all the changes of thought and action which take place in the world around. This is true of science and philosophy, of art and religion. The members of Churches are more or less affected. Their own religious and ethical ideas may be greatly modified,—even the growth of a liberal spirit, however pure and good in itself, may expose to the danger of perversion and contamination. A whole Church may thus be widely influenced by a few strong and somewhat worldly minds. Low ideas of religion and morals may thus be spread, and do marked injury to the spirit of those who receive them. Practices like those encouraged by Balaam may be more or less openly introduced, and may become sufficiently open to make the Church responsible for the right treatment and condemnation of them, and yet not so glaring and abhorrent as to make the more gentle and tolerant sufficiently decided and faithful in rebuking or even excommunicating the offenders.

We thus oppose the idea of so open and flagrant a conduct as the words at first suggest; because in the similar and even more marked corruption within the Church of Thyatira, which would seem known to all, we find Christ speaking as if His treatment would show to all that He “searcheth the hearts and reins,” clearly implying that no such conduct as that verbally described was intended, or that we are to take the words, to some extent at least, in a symbolical or mystical sense. Enough was seen to demand faithful discipline. The more gross and secret reality was seen only by those eyes which were as a flame of fire. As the words of Christ were read or heard, the conscience of the guilty

would not fail to interpret, and the mystic name, which has puzzled many a learned critic, would be clearly and certainly understood. We have no doubt that the more direct reference here is to the apostolic decree of Acts xv. However, we hold by a reference much wider still—namely, to every form of naturalism or paganism introduced for the first time or reintroduced into the Christian Church, even to every admixture of human error or corruption with the pure doctrines and precepts of Divine Revelation.

All this was but a beginning of the gradual perversion and paganisation of the Church, clearly set forth in this Book, and ending in the rise of mystical Babylon and the fall of mystical Jerusalem. Nor should Christians fail to learn a most serious and important lesson. If they would enjoy the favour and blessing of Jesus Christ, and if they would do their very best for the Churches with which they are connected, or for the Christian Church at large, they would do well to hold fast by a pure, complete and unmodified Christianity, and to contend faithfully and fervently for the spirituality, the purity, the Scriptural character of all Christian Communion.

9. "*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches.*" Well may Jesus so call on every thoughtful one thus to hear! What He says the Spirit says; and what the Spirit says He says. All are to hear what is here said. But we need not think exclusively of the Spirit's teaching in these epistles, or in the entire Apocalypse. The Scriptures of Divine and saving truth are to be accepted and obeyed in all instructions to Christians or to Churches. The outside world would do well to "hear what the Spirit says to the Churches" of Jesus Christ. His teaching no one can too highly prize or too carefully practise. The truly taught of Christ will ever become the purest, wisest, noblest and best of men. When, on the Mount of Transfiguration, the voice of the Eternal came forth from the excellent glory, it simply and sublimely said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him."

10. "*To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the Paradise of God.*"

(1) How finely the Bible describes the entire circle of Divine and saving truth! It begins with Eden and the Tree of Life, lost by the sin of the first Adam; and it ends with the Paradise of God and the Tree of Life, regained by the righteousness of the Second Adam, whose words imply His right to restore what He has thus acquired.

(2) "*To him that overcometh.*" All Christians are soldiers, born soldiers. All have been conquered and enslaved; and must conquer their liberty. Christ can have no slave. Only conquerors and free men can enter heaven, the Paradise of God. The great enemy is sin. The great Deliverer is Jesus Christ. He is the only "Captain of Salvation," by whom God leads to victory over sin and Satan and the world,—we may say emphatically, over self, in this world, and to final blessedness and glory in the next. The warfare is very terrible. John gives us the only key to success: "This is the victory"—the victorious principle or power—"which overcometh the world, even our faith,"—our faith in Christ, our living union with Him, our faithfulness and love to Him, our prayerful and self-denying and persevering service of Him, the constant help and blessing of His Holy Spirit, His own and His and our Father's presence to cheer and power to keep and to help in all our times of need and throughout the whole course of life in this evil and seductive world. "Thus are we called upon, to 'fight the good fight of faith,' to make this great warfare the real and the most earnest work of life. Often let us remember that we must conquer and destroy sin, or sin will conquer and destroy us. In ourselves we have simply no strength: 'apart from Christ we can do nothing.' In Him and through Him we are sure of final victory, of coming off even more than conquerors.

(3) "*To Him will I give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the Paradise of God.*"

a. As already said, we have here Eden regained, "Paradise restored." It is now glorified and exalted to heaven, the home of the redeemed, of their Saviour and God.

b. The Tree of Life is of course no literal tree. As in Eden, so in this Paradise, we are taught symbolically of the Divine gift of a glorious immortality to all the children of God, who continue as the angels of light, or who become, as all true disciples of Christ, loving and faithful to Him. In a real and high sense, Christ Himself is the true and only Tree of Life. As He says of Himself, "I am the Bread of Life. . . . If any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever": "He that cometh to Me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst": "For this is the will of My Father, that every one that beholdeth the Son, and believeth on Him, should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." Thus is the Tree of Life replanted even on earth. All who partake of its

life-giving fruit begin a new divine and heavenly life. All who continue to feed upon this spiritual food will grow in strength and fitness for the work and warfare of this world. All, in fact, who make Christ their all in all will have life and health and strength in Him, will gain victory after victory through Him, and will find at last that He wills that they shall be ever with Him to share in His glory and to have in Him this Tree of Eternal Life.

II.—THE EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH IN SMYRNA.

Rev. ii. 8—11.

"And to the angel of the Church in Smyrna write:—These things saith the First and the Last, who was dead, and lived (again): I know thy tribulation, and thy poverty (but thou art rich), and the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and they are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Fear not the things which thou art about to suffer: behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches. He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."

1. "*To the angel of the Church in Smyrna write.*"

(1) We have already pointed to the fact, that the order in which these Churches are introduced is purely geographical, and by no means chosen because of aught successively distinguishing the Churches themselves. This important and flourishing city was about forty miles north of Ephesus, and was built at the head of "one of the finest bays in the world," and at the mouth of the river Meles. It is a very ancient city; has, with certain great reverses, enjoyed a long course of prosperity; and now is an important centre of trade, with more than "140,000 inhabitants, of whom there are 20,000 Greeks, 8,000 Armenians, about 2,000 Europeans, and 9,000 Jews. There are more Christians in Smyrna than in any other Turkish city in the world. Religious toleration has always been more fully permitted in Smyrna than in other cities under Mohammedan control, and rarely has Turkish fanaticism been directed against Europeans. It is a great centre of missionary effort, and in Smyrna the light of Christianity has never been extinguished from Apostolic times." (Alford.)

(2) To what we have said of the angel representing the entire

ministry of the Church, and not any one supreme ruler or bishop, we need not add more, unless to give some illustration of one point—namely, the identification of the angel with the whole Church—suggesting, as we have observed, that these Churches seem here recognised as really self-governing or self-governed, of course under Christ; the star and angel representing the Church as governing, and the candlestick representing it as governed. One bishop might, indeed, be fully representative of a whole Church. Still, the way in which the entire membership is again and again introduced where we naturally expect to find one individual person alluded to, is, to say the least, very remarkable, and suggestive of a ministry co-extensive with the Church itself. We might have illustrated this by referring to the whole tone of the preceding epistle. It was not the toil and patience, the hatred of evil, and especially of the evil deeds of the Nicolaitans, the loss of first love, and consequent fall, of any one bishop, of which the Great Head of the Church spoke. So in this epistle we are not at all naturally led to think of such a bishop, when it is said, “I know thy tribulation and thy poverty (but thou art rich) . . . Fear not the things which *thou* art about to suffer: behold, the devil is about to cast *some of you* into prison, that *ye* may be tried; and *ye* shall have tribulation ten days. Be *thou* faithful unto death, and I will give *thee* the crown of life.” We might quote from the other epistles. The above may suffice.

(3) In passing we may here allude to a very common opinion that the celebrated martyr, the saintly Polycarp, was, at this time, the Bishop of Smyrna, the very angel here addressed. That he was *a* bishop of Smyrna at a very much later date, and suffered martyrdom in or about A.D. 168, and after a very long life, we have of course no reason to doubt. But that he ever was *the* Bishop of Smyrna, as he is represented in ecclesiastical history, we are not prepared to believe. Our main reason for so saying is derived from the whole style of his own epistle to the Philippians, in which there is nothing to prove that he regarded himself as more or other than a presbyter among presbyters. But this is only corroborative. Our chief, and, we think, most decisive reason is to be found in the fact that, in writing to the Philippian Church, he not only makes no allusion to a bishop, and not only refers exclusively to presbyters and deacons, but also counsels the people to obey, not the Bishop, as he assuredly would have done if such a supreme officer had existed, but the

presbyters and deacons, as if these were the only rulers of the Church. His words are (chap. v.), "Wherefore it is needful to abstain from all these things, *being subject to the presbyters and deacons, as unto God and Christ.*" This is in wonderful harmony with the Apostle Paul's words to this very Church: "Paul . . . to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." Now, as presbyters and bishops are again and again interchanged in the New Testament, we may see how thoroughly the words of Paul and Polycarp, addressed to the same people, agree.

Further, in order to suppose—for we can do no more than suppose—that Polycarp was the angel here addressed, we must also suppose that his term of office extended to more than seventy years. Besides, even if he were a presbyter-bishop for so long a time, he must have been so young at the date of the Apocalypse, that we cannot suppose that he had so very early risen to the highest place in the Church, and thus with authority over all the other office-bearers. For a long time, authors were desirous of stamping post-Apostolic doctrines and institutions with Apostolic authority, and so were induced to represent such a man as Polycarp as a friend and disciple of the Apostle John. We seem to have very much reason to conclude that such was the spirit and manner in which not a little was written of this saintly man.

2. "*These things saith the First and the Last, which was dead, and lived (again).*" Here the Speaker again makes use of His own self-descriptive words, and that most suitably to the case of the Smyrnan Church. They were addressed to John to remove fear and inspire confidence; and we may infer that they were here repeated for a like purpose, though by no means for that alone. This Church was about to be warned of a coming storm, and needed all the encouragement which such descriptive words were fitted to convey. Jesus claims to be all that any afflicted Church or Christian can possibly stand in need of, even "The First and the Last," the great Jehovah, the Eternal God, the Creator and Preserver of all things. He also sets forth His perfect and sinless humanity. He was a Witness faithful unto death. He only asks them to follow His example. He also rose from the dead and is alive for evermore. They, therefore, need fear no death, destined, like His, to be followed by a higher life and a blessed resurrection. What He thus says, He says to all Churches and Christians. Just as He here presents Himself, an all-sufficient source of comfort and strength, He may be viewed

as everywhere and always presenting Himself to all afflicted ones. Let us ever trust in Him. He will never fail in times of need.

3. "*I know thy tribulation and thy poverty (but thou art rich), and the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and they are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.*"

(1) Here all is commendation. No word of complaint or censure is uttered. This is a model Church. Love to Christ seems to abound. It is to be feared that one cause of the decay of this, the spirit and sum of all Christian goodness, in the Ephesian Church, may have been the possession or growth of earthly wealth, which has been a too frequent source of spiritual evil. The love of the world grows, and the love of God decays. Conformity to the world increases, and conformity to the mind and will and likeness of God decreases. This ought not to be, and need not be. When Christians learn to use their possessions in the service of their Master, and in the advancement of His kingdom, their wealth, like mercy, will be twice blessed: it will bless both him who gives and him who receives. This Church did not suffer from over-much wealth. Whilst patient in tribulation, it was, in a worldly sense, very poor. Tenderly and compassionately Jesus says, "*I know thy tribulation and thy poverty.*"

(2) (*But thou art rich.*) Fine parenthesis! How beautiful! How cheering! How gloriously true! Poor, yet rich! Ah! How many are rich and yet poor—very rich and yet very poor! How sad the case of all of whom Christ speaks as "*laying up a treasure for themselves, and yet not being rich toward God!*" How grand the words of Paul, "*Poor, yet making many rich!*" This Church was rich in faith, rich in the grace of God, rich in love to Christ, rich towards God, rich in noble Christian character, rich in a life that cannot perish, rich in an inheritance incorruptible and everlasting, rich in the love and in the resources of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

(3) "*I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and they are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.*" This does not mean any direct or intended blasphemy of God, but rather of these Christians as Christians, and therefore of Christ as Christ. Who were these blasphemers? It may be well to remember that, in this Book, we never find the name Christian; but that all true Christians are viewed as the true Israel of God. These persons, whoever they were, must be regarded as maintaining the exclusive right to be acknowledged as veritable Jews or the true Israel. Unbelieving Jews were ever ready to accuse Christians of

every kind of crime. They might also contrast themselves, as real Israelites, with Christians as merely pretending Israelites. Yet, though descendants of Abraham, in rejecting the promised Messiah they had really ceased to be such Jews as really enjoy the favour and praise of God. They had in very deed become a synagogue of Satan. However, there were also professedly Christian Jews or Israelites, who, as we are told in the Acts of the Apostles and elsewhere, held fast by the Law, and would not acknowledge, as true Christians or real Israelites, those who did not adhere to the Law. The words here used might seemingly apply to either of these parties. We might well suppose that the blasphemy or evil speaking was more decidedly, though by no means exclusively, chargeable on the former than on the latter; only the reverse seems supported by what is said in the epistle to the Church in Philadelphia.

4. "*Fear not the things which thou art about to suffer: behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days.*"

(1) "*Fear not the things which thou art about to suffer.*" Here we have a sad disclosure of the future, yet made in condescension and love for the good of this Church. Jesus would encourage these suffering Christians to hold on and to hold fast, because, still more as they would have to suffer, all would end well. They would be tried in the furnace, but they would come forth as gold. The trial would be to their praise and glory. They were nobly to endure. They would come forth, like the three faithful Israelites, from the fiery furnace, without a hair singed or any mark of real injury upon them.

(2) "*Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried.*" The whole tribulation is here traced to Satan or the false accuser; and, as we have hinted, Jewish persecution often took the form of a dastardly calumny. In this Book, the devil, Satan, the old serpent, is again and again represented as the real source of all antagonism to Christ and His kingdom, in harmony with what we find recorded in the first pages of Scripture. Here he is said to persecute and to imprison. He would stir up the people, Jewish and Gentile, against these sincere and noble-hearted Christians; and the deceived magistracy would treat them as hostile to the peace and interests of the State. So it has been with regard to the best and most peaceful Christian citizens ever since: they have been deemed the very worst enemies of God and man. They

were not to think themselves forsaken, because of their sufferings, of Christ or of God. The end of all was the trial of their faith, and the experiment and all-sufficient proof of their exalted worth.

(3) "*And ye shall have tribulation ten days.*" We need not say that this clause is somewhat obscure, and that not a little difference of opinion exists regarding it. Some suppose a reference to what has been called "The ten persecutions." But, whilst these have been by no means well defined, or even authenticated, there would be an interval between persecution and persecution, implying that none of these people would suffer throughout all the ten. We seem, therefore, led to the conclusion that some one special period is intended; but whether of literally ten days' duration, or of a longer time of ten mystical or symbolical days, we may find it somewhat hard to determine. On the whole, we are disposed to take the latter view. Still, we are not prepared to apply the year-day principle in this place. We rather think that the number ten is sometimes used, like the number seven, with the idea of completeness. A short period is here used for a longer, that the sufferers might not be discouraged; and yet that period is such that they could only draw from it the general, and yet very important conclusion that their troubles would last as long as their real good required, and no longer.

5. "*Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life.*" A grander saying than this can hardly be found. Only this one glorious King can so speak or promise to His "glorious army of martyrs." Men may have fame, and may be rewarded by their king or country during life or up to death; but neither king nor country can promise a new lease of life, far less a life that can never end. Only a few can secure for themselves a place on the page of human history; and that even these cannot enjoy. They, with the most obscure, must sleep in the dust, and can hear no voice of praise. Here the death of the martyr is but a sad transition to a glad and glorious life. The mighty Hand waits to place the crown of life on his faithful and noble brow. In being faithful to Him, even up to death, they might be well assured that He could not but prove faithful to them. Nor need we restrict this precious promise to those who actually die for the Lord Jesus: the truly faithful life here will be crowned with a glorious life hereafter.

6. "*He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.*" The trumpet-call of the Faithful Witness

is here repeated. In Him, or by Him, the Divine Spirit had been speaking to this second Church; and what He said to that one He said to all Churches of all times. Emphatically does He speak to all in the words which follow.

7. "*He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.*" This promise fitly follows that of the preceding epistle: the two form one complete whole. The one is that of a second and eternal life: the other is that of freedom from the second and inconceivably awful death. Both promises again appear on the closing pages of this Book. There we read of the Tree of Life in the new and heavenly Jerusalem. There, too, we read of the second death, which shall come upon all whose names are not written in the Book of Life. Only in the Apocalypse do we find this terrible description of the doom of the impenitent,—the second death. How glorious, and yet how awful, this Book, nay, the whole Book of Divine Revelation!

III.—THE EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH IN PERGAMUM.

Rev. ii. 12—17.

"And to the angel of the Church in Pergamum write:—These things saith He that hath the sharp two-edged sword: I know where thou dwellest, (even) where Satan's throne is: and thou holdest fast My name, and didst not deny My faith, even in the days of Antipas, My faithful witness, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also some that hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans in like manner. Repent therefore; or else I come to thee quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches. To him that overcometh will I give of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it."

1. "*And to the angel of the Church in Pergamum write.*"

The name, according to common usage, should be Pergamum. This city still survives in the present Bergamo. As the capital of Mysia, it was "of great wealth and architectural grandeur, having a library equal to that of Alexandria." "The great glory of the city was the so-called Nicephorium, a grove of extreme beauty, laid out as a thank-offering for a victory over

Antiochus, in which was an assemblage of temples, probably of all the deities, Zeus, Athene, Apollo, Æsculapius. . . . After the extinction of its independence, the sacred character of Pergamum seems to have been put even more prominently forward." (Smith.)

2. "*These things saith He that hath the two-edged sword.*" This appropriation of a part of the descriptive words of the first chapter, we find in keeping with the state and character of this Church. Very much was exceedingly good, and yet one great evil existed, and was seemingly tolerated to such a degree as to threaten to call this fearful weapon into use. Christ fights against evil as evil, even in friends as well as foes. There is many a spiritually incurable disease, as there is many a physical one, which, to save life, must be removed by the painful use of the knife.

3. "*I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's throne is: and thou holdest fast My name, and didst not deny My faith, even in the days of Antipas, My faithful witness, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.*"

(1) Here Jesus, the most gracious Saviour as well as most impartial Judge, kindly begins by stating that He knew the temptations and dangers with which these Christians were surrounded, and thus the difficult position which they had to occupy, and in which their fidelity would be severely tested. Pergamum is spoken of as the very capital of the kingdom of darkness, where Satan might be said to have set his throne and fixed his dwelling-place, and thus to exert all his power to tempt and to destroy. All this seems said to prepare for both the praise and the censure which follow. The impartial Judge would weigh every circumstance, whether fitted to increase the one or to lessen the other. Heathenism reigned here. The region was sacred to the gods. The worship may have been very varied, suited to all tastes and inclinations: in some respects like that of ancient Moab, to which reference is made,—idolatrous and licentious. The new and pure and exclusive religion of Christ would not be tolerated. Persecution arose and became deadly. One true and faithful witness fell. Here we find his brief and precious epitaph, written by the finger of the King of martyrs, and that on a page more lasting than brass,—"*Antipas My witness, My faithful one.*" Nowhere else do we read of this noble martyr. He fell on one of the high places of the field. Many an unknown martyr has fallen since. Their blood was

not shed in vain. We know, at least, that they have been very noble as well as very many. All were literally miracles of Divine and all-sufficient grace.

(2) This Church is highly commended, by the Faithful Witness, for courageous and self-sacrificing fidelity to Him and to His name. In this respect it seems to stand as high as that of Smyrna. Thus far it seems a regiment of noble spiritual heroes, which has grandly distinguished itself in the face of every danger, and in the service of its King. Well, therefore, may we feel disappointed and saddened, when we find that, with all its most admirable qualities, the eye of the Captain can and does detect a weakness, which seems utterly unworthy of soldiers so esteemed and extolled.

4. "*But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also some that hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans in like manner.*"

(1) "A few things";—the plural being used apparently because the singular would have suggested the idea of a small thing. There was really only one thing complained of, and that a very great thing; all showing a marked contrast between this Church and that of Ephesus. Here we find no apparent want of love or loyalty to Jesus Christ. In respect to these, the Church of Smyrna does not seem superior. In its noble intolerance of the evil of these Nicolaitans, the Ephesian Church rises in external purity and force of character decidedly above this. In fact, we have a double contrast suggested: on the one hand, the interior life of this Church, its love to Christ for example, seems to contrast with the decayed inner life or love to Christ of the Ephesian; and, on the other, the exterior life of the latter, its resistance of evil especially, rises decidedly above that of the former, whose exterior life, emphatically its tolerance of evil, is here condemned. It seems strange that a people so praised should at the same time merit such rebuke. After so nobly resisting the power of persecution, they show a too common weakness in yielding to social influence. They appear to have been on the whole conscientiously and firmly devoted to Christ and His persecuted cause and kingdom, so that they would yield to no opposition or seduction themselves; but, when called upon to deal faithfully with the errors and sins

of others,—even of certain of themselves,—they want either the courage or the heart to do their duty. Conformity to the social customs of the surrounding heathen seems to have been the source of the evils complained of. A false liberality may have proved injurious. Certain of them seem chargeable with the sin of violating the law of the Apostles to which we have already alluded, and of following the fearful example of those who yielded to the seductive snares of the Moabites, suggested by the treacherous teachings of Balaam. We have pretty fully treated of this already. We have regarded these Nicolaitans as corresponding to the deluded followers of Balaam. There seems no real force in the words here used, unless this is the case. The complaint is, that “thou hast some that hold the teaching of Balaam.” Then follows an explanation, implying that some of ancient Israel yielded, and so held his doctrine. Next, it is added, “so hast thou also some that hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.” But, there was only one party condemned—the some who held the teaching of Balaam, and the some who held the teaching of the Nicolaitans—and therefore the teachings were one and the same, thus far at least; and, as we have already said, the one stood to Christians in a relation corresponding to that in which the other stood to ancient Israel.

(2) We may notice the difference between the Authorised and Revised Versions,—the “which thing I hate” of the former, and the “in like manner” of the latter. In this we seem to have an example of the transference of a word or clause from one place to another: here the transference of the words “which thing I hate,” which were fitly used in the first instance, but needlessly repeated in the second; whilst the “in like manner” of the Revised may be regarded as at once suitable and correct. We may here say that this may suggest the possibility of like transferences or changes elsewhere. If, at least, we come to see the likelihood of any such alteration, this will tend to support the supposition of the reality of it. Nor could we find anything more suitable here than “in like manner.” The parallel between the two cases was clearly drawn. The one case, as we have pointed out, corresponded with the other.

In like manner, also, we might point to many similar correspondences in the history of revelation. We might show that, as God went on to reveal His truth, men were ever ready to introduce their own errors and corruptions. What ought to have been distinguished by perpetual progress was thus often inter-

rupted by human perversion; so that the Divine work seemed many a time utterly destroyed, and thus to require as often to be apparently begun anew. It was so in Old Testament times; and so, in many respects, it has been with the Christian Church. How important, then, that all Christians should do all in their power to preserve the purity of Divine and saving truth, as well as to maintain the like purity of the morals of the Church! We might here show how error and even sinful practice have often entered, and may too easily enter, the Church of Christ. We might point to the mighty perverting power of the surrounding people. We might point to the fact that even the most certainly converted men may bring with them many of the errors and sins of earlier days and of youthful education. We might point to the natural constitution of individual men and the peculiarities of whole races. We might point to the changes in human thought through the advance of science and philosophy. The discovery of even the most precious truth may be so employed, or simply so apprehended, as to lead to doubt on the one hand, or to the misconception of religion on the other. In fact, there can be no great change in the realm of human thought or action which does not affect the thought and practice of the Christian people. Against all evil influence, all ought to watch and pray and work. At the same time, no one ought ever to transgress the laws of charity or true liberty, in order to the maintenance of what is deemed the truth. Laxity of discipline is here condemned. Undue strictness may be condemned also. We must not condemn all change. Innovation may be good as well as evil. We ought to pay all due respect to the conscientious convictions of others. Whilst we are thoroughly devoted to the truth ourselves, we must not interfere with the free investigation of others. The Creed must be short, if the Communion of Saints is to be large. The Apostles' Creed has often been commended. We greatly prefer the Creed of the Baptismal Formula, which Christ demands and which all Christians ought to profess, even that implied in the words, "The Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

5. "*Repent therefore; or else I come to thee quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.*" How grand a complete full-orbed Christian character! In this Church it was wanting. It is possible to possess a large measure of real goodness, and yet to be incapable of hating evil with due intensity. Strong in many points, Christians and Christian

Churches may, like this, be exceedingly weak in some one point. Here, accordingly, guilt is affirmed and repentance demanded. The great law everywhere appears on the pages of Scripture,—Repentance or Punishment. It is in reality a law of grace and mercy, with which no sound mind can find fault. Nor would Christ delay, if they remained impenitent: He would come quickly, suddenly, unexpectedly, surely. As we have again and again said, the Ever-coming One would come to these, as He will come at last to all. He would “war against them.” It is not said “against thee.” Still the latter as well as the former is meant. In fighting against a portion of an organised community, He would so act that all would suffer. Directly He would fight against the guilty, the unfaithfully tolerated ones, those who held the teachings of the Nicolaitans, and who resembled those who held the teachings of Balaam. These would be smitten “with the sword of His mouth.” If these were severely punished, the Church would suffer,—parents would suffer in their guilty and impenitent children, relatives and friends in relatives and friends. How often do Churches perish through unfaithfulness to those around them, no less than to those connected with them! How wise as well as faithful the Great Witness, Jesus Christ!

6. “*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.*” Here the same call is given. Great encouragement is given to every faithful people, whilst all others receive all the warning needed. This Church was noble, and yet failed to hate and rebuke evil, as it ought.

7. “*To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth but he that receiveth it.*”

(1) Here we have another, and that a most precious crown, presented to the faithful and victorious soldier of the Cross. How many are tempted to yield in the day of battle! In all these cases we should mark what is praised or censured in the Church, and then learn of some special kind of contest in which we may be engaged, and thus of some corresponding conquest of which the special reward is declared. Here the special contest is that with all such sins as those traceable to the counsel of Balaam. Like temptation was presented to the Christians of Pergamum. Hence, we may say, the peculiar fitness of the promise of the hidden manna. The nature of the temptation seems also to

suggest the propriety of the promise of the white stone with the new name inscribed.

(2) How precious this twofold promise !

a. "*The hidden manna.*" This of course refers to the manna, "the angels' food," "the daily bread," of Israel, whilst passing through a region which could yield no adequate support to such a multitude. They lived, we may say, by means of a perpetual miracle. Christian pilgrims and soldiers need a food which this world does not supply, even "that bread which comes from heaven." It is most real, though invisible. It is called a "hidden manna," seemingly with an allusion to that which was laid up and preserved within the tabernacle. The pilgrim-soldier may be viewed as going on from battle to battle, but not always from victory to victory ; though, in the main and in the end, he is really more than conqueror. With every success the promised blessing comes. Like his Captain, "he has meat to eat which others know not." Externally he may be poor and even without food. Apparently triumphed over by the foe, to whose allurements he would not yield, he receives a rich supply of "the hidden manna," of bread from the unseen table of the invisible King. A former promise related to "the Tree of Life." This relates to "the Bread of Life." In one sense they are the same : they are what Jesus provides—nay, what Jesus is.

→ The victor feels his oneness with Christ and with God. He enjoys the sweetest as well as the most secret communion with Christ and with God. He has a consciousness of the loving and approving presence and smile of Christ and of God. To him "all the promises are yea and amen in Christ Jesus." He has a deep and secret satisfaction in the thought that he has triumphed over self, over sin, over temptation, over the world, over Satan, over some evil power working against his true liberty and for his very destruction. This satisfaction is the deeper and the fuller and the more delightful, because he feels that he has overcome, not by his own strength, which is utter weakness, but through the grace of God, which, he knows, is all-sufficient. "The joy of the Lord is his strength." The hand which gives "the manna" supplies every secret spiritual want. When the pilgrim journey and warfare are ended, that food, which sustains immortal life, will be ever possessed and enjoyed. The promised blessing will continue for ever and ever.

b. "*A white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it.*" We need not

say that these words are so far obscure, and have given rise to much inquiry and discussion. The general meaning seems pretty clear and certain. The victor, as already said, will have a deepened sense of Divine aid on the one hand, and of Divine approval on the other. This seems indicated by the colour of the stone. Further, victory after victory will disclose to his own consciousness the difference between what he naturally was and what he has graciously become. He will have a new consciousness of self, or the consciousness of a new self, a new spirit, a new nature, a new name. This no one can know but himself.

As to the more detailed interpretation of these remarkable words, critics have made every use of the Greek and Latin classics. Here, however, as elsewhere, Scripture seems its own best interpreter. Archbishop Trench has well said, "'white' is everywhere the colour and livery of heaven; and nowhere with greater or so great an emphasis, or rather with so frequent iteration, as in this Book." Again "as 'white,' so 'new,' belongs eminently to this Book; being one of the key-words of it." He then refers to the Greek commentator Andreas, who "sees allusion in these words to the white pebble, by placing which in the ballot-box the great judges pronounced the sentence of acquittal ($\psi\eta\phi\omicron\iota$ $\sigma\omega\zeta\omicron\upsilon\sigma\alpha\iota$ they were therefore called), as the black of condemnation—a custom expressed in the well-known lines of Ovid (*Metam.* xv. 41, 42):—

‘Mos erat antiquus, niveis atrisque lapillis,
His damnare reos, illis absolvere culpæ.’

"But, not to speak of a grave fault . . . the absolving pebble was not given to the acquitted, as this is to the victor, nor was there any name upon it." . . . "Others see allusion to the *tessera* (it too was called $\psi\eta\phi\omicron\varsigma$) which the conquerors at . . . the games" received. "Vitringer is obliged to confess that he can only explain the symbol by combining together these two customs of the absolving pebble, and the *tessera* given to the victor in the games, which two in the higher interpretation must be blended into one."

Dr. Trench finds fault with all these as "borrowed from *heathen* antiquity, while this Book moves exclusively within the circle of sacred, that is, of Jewish imagery and symbols." The theory which he supports, and which supposes a reference to the Urim and Thummim, seems less plausible. We cannot deem the objection that the absolving pebble was not given to the

acquitted of any real force. It was given for him ; and, like any vote for a person, may be said to be given to him. Nor does Dean Alford's objection appear of great weight—namely, that the verdict of *acquittal* would be a strange reward to one who has fought and overcome in the strength of an acquittal long ago obtained." The assurance of acquittal is of vast importance. Christians by no means always possess it. It is one thing to believe in one's forgiveness on the ground of full Scripture warrant ; and another thing to have added to that the deep and secret assurance of the gracious aid and cheering, inspiring approbation of God, which follows and richly rewards the conquests of the Christian. We feel greatly in favour of the idea of a deepened assurance of the Divine approbation, a deepened sense of the reality of one's own religion, along with a joyous and grateful feeling of being led from victory to victory by Him who alone can lead to final conquest.

It so happens that, in the only other case in which the word occurs in the New Testament, it has the meaning of a vote, a vote against the accused, and so proving that it would also be used for a vote of acquittal : Acts xxvi. 10,—“I gave my vote against them” (*κατ'ἑνεγκα ψῆφον*) ; both vote and manner of voting being thus implied, and that illustrative of the words before us. The custom was thus common to Jews and Gentiles, as it is among ourselves ; whence the word “black-balled.” The victor, then, receives a white stone of approval from the great Captain, a secret “Well-done,” which no one can hear but himself ; and on the white stone a new name, which no one can know but himself ;—as we have already said, the sense of a new self, or new nature, a new heart, the deep and vivid consciousness of being a new man, a son of God, an heir of heaven. This consciousness is no deception. It is a consciousness of a reality, the new nature referred to ; and that he carries with him to the unseen world the very seal of the Holy, new-creating Spirit, which provides for him a blessed recognition and acceptance in the day of redemption. Well may all daily and earnestly seek and cherish the grace which leads from victory to victory and thus to final conquest, and so secures this rich, continuous and eternal reward !

IV.—THE EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH IN THYATIRA.

Rev. ii. 18—29.

"And to the angel of the Church in Thyatira write:—These things saith the Son of God, who hath His eyes as a flame of fire, and His feet are like to burnished brass: I know thy works, and thy love and faith and ministry and patience, and that thy last works are more than the first. But I have against thee, that thou sufferest the woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess; and she teacheth and deceiveth My servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time that she should repent; and she willet not to repent of her fornication. Behold, I do cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of her works. And I will kill her children with death; and all the Churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your works. But to you I say, to the rest that are in Thyatira, as many as have not this teaching, which know not the depths of Satan, as they say; I cast upon you none other burden, but (this), That which you have, hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, even he that keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to shivers; as I also have received of My Father: and I will give him the Morning Star. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches."

1. "*And to the angel of the Church in Thyatira write.*" This city was a Macedonian colony, but of no great importance. Apollo was here worshipped as the Sun-god. It still remains with the name Al Hissar. We need not say that from it came Lydia, whose conversion through the agency of the Apostle Paul we find recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. Conjecture, mere conjecture, has regarded her as the means of introducing the Gospel into her native place. We have simply no information with regard to this.

2. "*These things saith the Son of God, who hath His eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like burnished brass.*"

(1) Here the Royal High Priest uses the great name, the Son of God, not only as His due, but as peculiarly befitting the position which, as King of Israel and Ruler of the nations. He was about to assume. Important reference was to be made to the second Psalm, in which the Messiah is called the Son of God—of course in an inferior sense in so far as the king of

ancient Israel was alluded to, but in the highest sense of the Messiah or King of the true Israel of God.

(2) All is in keeping with the character of the epistle, especially the censure and threatenings which it contains. "His eyes like a flame of fire" symbolise His omniscience and purity, His indignation at the sight of evil. "His feet like burnished brass" seem to express resistless energy and fervent zeal in the treatment of unrepented sin.

3. "*I know thy works, and thy love and faith and ministry and patience, and that thy last works are more than the first.*" A higher character could not well be given to any Church. First love seems even to have increased, and thus to have abounded in an increase of good works. Faith, too, seems to have waxed stronger and deeper, and so to have issued in a richer service. Nor was Christian patience wanting. All seemed to flourish, and to please the pure eyes of Jesus. How strange that, after such commendation, words of terrible rebuke should follow!

4. "*But I have against thee, that thou sufferest the woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess; and she teacheth and deceiveth My servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols.*"

Here we have an allusion to one of the special agents in the seduction of ancient Israel to false religion. Jezebel, the daughter of the king of Tyre, and wife of Ahab, king of Israel, did all in her power to suppress the worship of Jehovah, and to introduce the idolatrous and licentious worship of Baal, whose priest her father is supposed to have been. Her case is so far like that of Balaam. In these epistles, we may remark how the Head of the Church makes use of such facts in the history of Israel as were typical of like facts in the early history of the Christian Church. The evils committed in both cases are said to be the same. The whole Bible history very variously illustrates the fearful tendency of human nature to lead to departure from the knowledge and service of the true God.

(1) Some would read "thy wife," and suppose the wife of the bishop referred to, as Jezebel was the wife of the king of Israel. We have no ground for such an absurd supposition, or for the supposition of the existence of such a bishop as they suppose.

(2) Others, rejecting this, hold by the idea of a real person, a woman of great influence, acting as if inspired, and so claiming Divine authority. However, this view seems as groundless as

the other. The reference to her children clearly proves that no such person can be intended.

(3) Far more correctly do those appear to interpret who regard the whole as mystical, and so treat this woman as symbolising some party of heretics or innovators, of heathenish spirit, and, not improbably, of Gnostic ideas. The teaching or doctrine condemned being the same as that of the Nicolaitans, the same evil, only in some different form, appears to be intended. As the threatened punishment, if inflicted, would demonstrate the heart-searching power of "the Son of God," we must regard the perverting and corrupting agency as partly open and partly secret;—partly open, else the Church could not have been rebuked for tolerating it, and partly secret, else its punishment could not manifest the Divine omniscience just referred to. One thing we may at least assume, that the one Church was influenced as if by another Balaam, and the other Church as if by another Jezebel. Now, as Balaam was outside the kingdom of Israel, we may suppose the Nicolaitan perverting power to have been outside these early Churches; and this seems very exactly expressed by the descriptive words, "thou hast some that hold the teaching of Balaam,"—"some that hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans." By contact with their unconverted neighbours, these members of the Church appear to have been thus corrupted. Jezebel, again, was within the kingdom of Israel, had come from without, was no true convert, but brought her heathenism along with her. Her position gave her a terrible power. Acting along with and by means of the prophets of Baal, she appeared, to all intents, as a prophetess.

So here. The agency resembling hers, and called by her name, may have come from without. They may have entered the Church as professedly Christian, though really unconverted, and so bringing with them the heathenish spirit and a certain portion of the doctrines or teachings here referred to. The Church may have been lax in receiving them, and lax in dealing with them. Once within, and possibly possessing the influence of social rank and intellectual culture, they would have their followers. The woman would have associates in sin as well as children through religious and moral perversion. The whole symbolism seems to point to the existence, possibly to the rise, of some such system as the Gnostic, so far introduced as we have suggested. Though the sins condemned are those referred to in the apostolic decree of Acts xv., and may be here included,

we seem by no means bound to suppose them alone intended. Every form of corrupt religion and corrupt morals might be described as thus symbolised. The great marriage law, which Jezebel led her royal husband and his people to violate, was that between them, as a kingdom, and their covenant-God, the Jehovah of Israel. So, we think, we may suppose a reference to some such disloyalty, inward and outward, to the like covenant-relationship to Jesus Christ, who is so expressly set forth in this Book as the true Bridegroom and Husband of the Christian Church. In fact, we have here alluded to and condemned the partial reintroduction of Paganism; and all Churches are warned against the danger of Naturalism, in the form of religious error, leading to or combined with immoral or unchristian practice, entering the Church, corrupting the members, and in the end destroying the Church itself.

5. *"And I gave her time that she should repent, and she willeth not to repent of her fornication. Behold, I do cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of her works. And I will kill her children with death; and all the Churches shall know that I am He that searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your works."*

(1) Guilty as was this party, punishment, as ever with the blessed God, can be inflicted only in the case of final impenitence. The corrupting and the corrupted must suffer,—the former certainly, because impenitent,—the latter only if they will not repent. The description of the punishment is figurative, and in keeping with the figurative description of the perverting agency. Time was given for repentance. This may refer to a period following some previous warning, or simply a sufficiently long period of Divine forbearance. The perverted are called upon to repent of "her works," according to the Revised Version. If this be correct, then the meaning must be, not the works which she did, but the works which she led them to do, and thus, though with a very pointed reference to the seducing power, really "their works," as in the Authorised.

(2) The death here spoken of seems to be rightly regarded as that of pestilence. Its effect would be, if inflicted, most impressive and widely spread. It would resemble that of the death of Ananias and Sapphira. All the Churches would feel it,—feel that they were under the pure and all-seeing eye of Jesus Christ. He would thus be seen as having "His eyes like a flame of fire,"

observing all hearts and deeds, and "His feet as burnished brass," or Himself as clothed with mighty energy, to punish as well as to reward. Hence, "I will give to each one of you according to your works." A great and impressive fact, which all of every age should often ponder, and which should lead all to frequent and fervent prayer for grace to sanctify, and to keep in the narrow way of Christian life and duty.

6. "*But to you I say, to the rest that are in Thyatira, as many as have not this teaching, which know not the deep things of Satan, as they say; I cast upon you none other burden, but (this), That which ye have, hold fast till I come.*"

(1) Jesus now turns to "the rest in Thyatira," to all not infected with the heathenism condemned, even those already so highly commended, and exhorts and encourages them to perseverance in well-doing. They stood high in His esteem; and He gives such counsel as was fitted to lead them to secure that esteem. His negative description of them is very peculiar, and not a little obscure,—“As many as have not this teaching, which know not the depths of Satan, as they say.” The paganising party are thus apparently of Gnostic character, professedly seeking knowledge of every kind, and, for the sake of it, practising vice of every form. They would fathom the depths of moral evil as well as rise to the heights of moral good. They would know Satan as well as God. In seeking the experimental knowledge of sin, they would not admit that they sinned. They too much resembled those of modern days, who really deny the very existence of sin, or at least so speak of it as necessary to the highest development of the constitution and character of man as to deny its essential nature as sin.

(2) "*I cast upon you none other burden, but (this), That which ye have hold fast till I come.*" Here the first clause closely resembles a clause in the decree of the Apostolic Council, so that it has been inferred that such is the only burden intended. With the present punctuation, common to Authorised and Revised Versions alike, and defended by some, we do not wonder that it should be so hard to determine what this burden is. The mistake seems to lie in adherence to that punctuation, and in thus making two separate sentences out of one well-constructed sentence. Both here and in the decree the same word, *πλήν*, *but*, is used, and with the same connecting force. Alford, indeed, contends that, in this case, a *this*, *τοῦτο* or *τό*, would have been added to *πλήν*. We have supposed *this* to be understood. However,

when we find all simplified by thus connecting the clauses, the absence of the "*this*" should create no real difficulty, especially in a Book which Alford and others acknowledge to be distinguished by occasional loose construction. However, if we keep by our English Version, the "but" will yet do what we say, and thus make the perseverance enjoined the one and only burden imposed. They are to hold fast till He come. Here we seem to have a simple illustration of what we have maintained, that Christ points individuals to His special coming for them, and the collective Church to His final coming. All are to hold fast till He come,—till He come to call them individually,—till He come to call the last generation of Christians and to gather all generations of Christians to open and final judgment. How weighty these and all the words of Christ! They are intended for all. Well may all take them most earnestly to heart, and seek the grace to hold on and to hold fast!

7. "*And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of a potter are broken to shivers; as I also have received of My Father: and I will give him the Morning Star.*"

(1) Two things may be noted here: (a) the conjunction "and" is used for the first time before the allusion to the conqueror, apparently showing a connection between the contest and the evils previously pointed out; (b) the fact that here the call to hear the Spirit for the first time follows the promise to the victor. Whether these changes, doubtless intended, are of much or of any significance, we may not be able decidedly to say.

(2) Here also we find a further difference in the addition, "and He that keepeth My works unto the end." We think this very fine, suggesting, as it does, a most simple and most useful idea of the conqueror. "The keeping to the end" is also a simple and most useful addition to "the holding fast till I come." Individual Christians can be at no loss to understand the former. Like the latter, it has a double reference. The two explain each other. Both, we would again repeat, point to the Ever-coming One who shall come at last.

(3) The promise is peculiar,—“power or authority over the nations,”—a suitable reward for victory over the sins and temptations of the world, or over such evils as assailed this Church. A grand principle is thus set forth: that the Church of Christ will rise to supreme influence and power over the nations, or over the

world, not by means of a policy of compromise or of partial yielding to the ideas and customs of the world, but by rising superior to the evils, the sins and temptations of the world, and by uncompromising denial of all the ever-rising evil tendencies of the human heart. The kingdom of heaven must rise above all the kingdoms of the world, if the promised conquest is ever to be achieved or secured. We say, achieved or secured, because saintly superiority to the world will assuredly conquer the world, and because oneness with Christ in pure loving obedience will secure His iron rule over the nations which reject Him and oppress His people: a tremendous evil, it may be said, but a most necessary evil, in order to the present protection of the Church and to the eventual good of mankind. He Himself rose to this high position. All His faithful followers rise to the same, *first*, as being one with Him, and so ruling in Him and by Him, and, *secondly*, because His rule is for them, for their highest interests, and thus is just as if the sceptre were wielded by their own hands. We must remember the allusion here made to the second Psalm. Only those who reject and oppose the Messiah of Jehovah, and so seek to crush the true Israel, are so to be overwhelmed or "broken to shivers." Christians, however feeble, need fear no foe, however mighty, as the strong Son of God is on their side, and He can easily triumph over all. For the overthrow of all deadly opposition, and for the creation of the very highest forms of good, "the children of Zion" may well "be joyful in their King."

(4) "*And I will give him the Morning Star.*" Jesus is Himself called by this name. Just in keeping with the above allusion to the second Psalm, Jesus says elsewhere, "I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the Morning Star." He will give Himself to the conqueror. He will be to him as the bright, the morning star, the star which ushers in the day, the star of glorious, immortal hope, the star which tells of the coming of the day of heaven, the day of eternal blessedness and glory, the day of which Jehovah and the Lamb are the exhaustless Light and unsetting Sun.

8. "*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches.*" On this we need make no remark, unless that, here and in this epistle, the Spirit seems emphatically to point to the great and most sacred duty of every Christian, that of holding fast and in all things by Christ Himself, and of keeping unwaveringly and in all things from the world.

V.—THE EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH IN SARDIS.

Rev. iii. 1—6.

"And to the angel of the Church in Sardis write:—These things saith He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars: I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and thou art dead. Be thou watchful, and stablish the things that remain, which are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfected before My God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and didst hear; and keep (it) and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. But thou hast a few names in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the Book of Life, and I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches."

1. Sardis was the capital of Lydia, whose king, Cræsus, was proverbially celebrated for his wealth. It is now an insignificant village, called Sart. When or by whom this Church was planted, we cannot say; but may conclude from the counsel to "remember how thou hast received and heard," that the Gospel must have been there powerfully preached and heartily received. Things had greatly changed.

2. "*These things saith He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars.*"

(1) How grand this claim of Jesus! He hath "the seven Spirits of God,"—the one Holy Spirit, by whom the heavens were garnished, by whom hearts are renewed, and who is the Source of all light and life and love to the Christian Church. This Spirit is Christ's, not simply because He and His Father are one, or alike Divine, but because of His great work and sacrifice on earth. These "seven Spirits" are said to be before the throne, as being ever ready to go forth from Father and Son to do the One Will in the work of human redemption.

(2) Thus was the Head of the Church perfectly fitted for His high position,—even that of having and rightly dealing with "the seven stars," the entire ministry of the Church, or the Church viewed as a ministering body, a body enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and made the medium of the Holy Spirit's light to mankind. But that light is no mere light of truth, however

precious : it is the light of love and of life, the very love and life which this Church mainly required. This union of the seven Spirits with the seven stars ought to be well noted. The stars shine by the power of the Spirit : apart from the Spirit they can give no light, they cannot shine. No ministry can therefore be wisely trusted unless as inspired and used by the living Spirit. This union of the seven Spirits and seven stars appears again, though in different symbolic form, in the description of the two witnesses (in chap. xi.) ; though in the one case we have stars and in the other candlesticks,—in the former Churches instructing and ruling, and in the latter Churches instructed and ruled,—in both cases, Churches enlightened and made sources of light by the Holy Spirit ; though, further, we have, in the one instance, expressly the seven Spirits or one perfect Spirit, and, in the other, olive trees, sons of oil, fountains of light. In both instances the same thing seems virtually symbolised, with this marked difference : the number seven denotes the completeness and universality of the Church, whilst the number two denotes the reduction of that witnessing Church to its lowest legal power to bear witness.

3. "*I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and thou art dead.*" What a fearful description of any Church, or of any man ! How deceptive the appearance ! Having a high name for life, and yet the very seat of death. So we find many instances in the case of the physical frame. So many a tree appears to flourish after all is rotten at the core. The life of faith and love may have been ebbing, whilst that of superficial virtue may have seemed richly to flow. How deceptive is sin, in saint as well as in sinner ! Real safety demands daily self-examination and constant prayer. Still, in this case, we must not take the words absolutely. Some life remained. Some things were not dead, but "*ready to die.*" Hence—

4. "*Be thou watchful, and stablish the things that remain, which are ready to die : for I have not found thy works perfected before My God.*"

(1) Christ kindly and wisely counsels the best remedy, that of watchfulness, always needed, as we have just hinted. No evil can be subdued without watching and prayer. The Christian soldier must be able to discern the real foe, and be prepared to meet him even before he assails. He must hate the evil which he may be least willing to give up. But watching is not enough. What of life or of grace may remain, however small or feeble,

must be valued, tended, cherished, stablished. He, who will not "quench the dimly burning taper," will come to the help of the spiritually diseased and dying, most undeserving as they may be, when they put forth the first effort, or rather when they direct to Him the first desire, to rise from their spiritual death-bed, and to walk in the freshness and fulness of renewed spiritual life. In telling these very persons that He had "the seven Spirits," the Spirit of life, Jesus would encourage them to look to Him for all-sufficient aid, and to put forth every effort for self-recovery in His name and power.

(2) In the Revised Version we have, "for I have found no works of thine fulfilled before My God." This seems so terrible an indictment, that we could not well accept the alteration unless on the most certain evidence. Of course, such might be said of all Churches, and of all Christians, if it merely meant that none are in themselves so absolutely perfect as to have works up to the absolutely perfect standard of duty in the sight of God. But this cannot be meant here, as all depends on the presence or absence of a *τὰ*, which might surely fall out of some MSS. It seems more than doubtful that so vast a change in the meaning should be based on so small a change in the text. We confess we do not like the word "fulfilled" of the Revised Version: we prefer the "complete" of Alford. Though less exact as a rendering, the "perfect" of the Authorised Version seems nearer to the real sense of the statement. The meaning seems to be that the works referred to were not so done as to appear to the eye of God as done with the whole heart, a perfect or undivided heart, and in obedience to the whole known will of Christ or of God. These works failed both by inward and outward defect. There was want of love; and there was omission of duty.

But this was not all. They involved continuance in positive sin. They were not, as we have hinted, imperfect merely in the sense in which the more advanced may regard their best works. In their secret hearts and lives they seem to have been guilty of cherishing and committing some one or other known sin. The flesh was not duly mortified. They did not "perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord." Christians may often come short of their duty, or of complete obedience to the will of God, and yet they may aim to do their whole duty or to render perfect obedience, and so be sincere and true in heart and life towards Jesus Christ. But, should they tamper with any one form of moral evil, and either secretly or openly persevere in the practice

of it, and do not and will not repent and seek full deliverance from its power, sooner or later "the evil conscience," even though it should not "make shipwreck of faith," is sure to eat into the spiritual vitals, to destroy all real and joyous confidence in Christ and in God, to banish the sense of Divine love, and to quench the flame of grateful, dutiful Christian affection. All would tend to the death affirmed of their Church. All this appears the more certainly correct, when considered in the light of what is said of the "few," who had not "defiled their garments," apparently implying that the many had so defiled themselves.

5. *"Remember therefore how thou hast received and didst hear, and keep (it) and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee."*

(1) This Church had enjoyed the very highest advantages, and so ought to keep in view the corresponding responsibilities. They are wisely taught to remember the past, that they, conscious of fearful shortcoming, might be awakened to an intensely anxious concern for the future. They are to keep fast hold of what they had heard and received, to make all good use of it, and thus to seek a revival of lost life, lost love, lost energy, lost hearty and full obedience. Christ would faithfully reprove; but He would not so cast down or cast off, that they could only despair.

(2) But they must no longer tamper with sin or trifle with their Saviour. They must henceforth be in real earnest. They must watch, as they had never watched before; and, we may add, as implied, they must pray as they never prayed before. "Ease in Zion"! Religion made or become easy! The flesh, the world, the devil, all powerless, distant and easily vanquished foes! Little need of watchfulness! Little need of prayer! Little need of the help of the Holy Spirit! So it is with all who would never rise to a real likeness to Christ. So it seems to have been with this Church. First faithfully counselled, they are next fearfully warned. If they would not watch, Christ would come, in a way that they would not like, and at a time when they would not expect. He would come. He would come, not as a Friend and Saviour, to be welcomed and to bless, but even as a thief, a thief in the night, to rob them of all they had or appeared to have, even of their high name; He would come as a Judge, not to approve, but to condemn. He does not mean openly or at the last day, but as He is ever coming to deal with the faithless. "What," to borrow His words spoken on

earth, "He says to this Church, He says to all Churches and to all Christians, Watch!"

6. *"But thou hast a few names in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy."*

(1) Among the faithless many, a few were faithful. Perhaps they are called "names" because of the good name ascribed to all. The contrast was very marked. By the few it may not have been clearly seen or deeply felt. They would not see how their neighbours were defiled. Though Christ praises them for their purity, they would often lament at least over this and that inward stain. Daily would they "wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb." Daily would they pray for the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit. Daily would they "walk humbly with God." Daily would they do what the many did not: they would "watch and pray that they might not enter into temptation."

(2) They would enjoy at last the most ample reward. "They shall walk with Me in white." How sweet, how sacred, how touching, yet how humbling, we might say how soul-subduing, these words of Christ,—words from the other world, words of Him who walked so humbly and holily here below, of Him who walks invisibly among the golden candlesticks, of Him who walks and shall ever walk amidst the stainless glories of the Upper Sanctuary, the loved, the honoured, the worshipped of angels and of men! What a thought, the thought of such notice, of such love, of such communion, of such nearness, of such blessedness and glory! What shall we say of the reason assigned?—"For they are worthy." To the sincere and humble Christian, this may well seem to go beyond all possible belief. How can he ever become worthy of such recognition and such exaltation? We know of no way in which Christian consciousness and Christian humility can get over this wondrous difficulty of belief, unless through the full remembrance that he is himself a work of grace, of Divine art, of Christ and His Holy Spirit, and that great Divine Artist will not fail so to finish His own work that it shall be in itself, and in the sight of God and of all creatures, worthy of Himself. Christ's work will not fail to be to His praise. As Paul has said of Him, "At the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with His mighty angels, . . . He shall come to be glorified in His saints and to be admired in all them that believe."

7. "*He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the Book of Life, and I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels.*" Here we find, once more, the Christian victor crowned with a most glorious reward, crowned indeed with a crown of glory, of dazzling brightness, and which cannot fade away. The words lead us to think of every victor, yet especially of the victor over the evil emphatically alluded to in this epistle. The reward is threefold, and most suitable to the conquest or final victory. (a) He who makes perfect purity the aim of his life in the realm of grace, will rise to perfect purity and glorious perfection in the realm of glory. (b) He who maintains a good conscience before God, giving his whole and undivided heart to Christ and His service, will never lose his Divine and spiritual life. His name will never be blotted out of the Book of Life. (c) He who lives in secret as in the presence of his God and Saviour, will at last be openly and honourably acknowledged before God and His holy angels, as one of the true brethren of Jesus, and as worthy of a place and name in the blessed and immortal family of God.

8. "*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.*" Well may this be thus repeated over and over again! How many are deaf to this gracious voice! Happy all who have ears to hear!

VI.—THE EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH IN PHILADELPHIA.

Rev. iii. 7-13.

"And to the angel of the Church in Philadelphia write:—These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth and none shall shut, and shutteth and none openeth: I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee a door opened, which none can shut, because thou hast a little power, and didst keep My word, and didst not deny My name. Behold, I give of the synagogue of Satan, of them which say they are Jews, and they are not, but do lie: behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Because thou didst keep the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which is about to come upon the whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown. He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out thence no more: and I will write

upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God, and Mine own new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches."

1. *"To the angel of the Church in Philadelphia write."*

Philadelphia, now Allahshar, "the city of God," was founded by Attalus Philadelphus, B.C. 140, and fell into the hands of the Romans B.C. 133. "It is difficult to trace its history from the date of the Apocalypse to the twelfth century. . . . It bravely resisted in siege after siege, until, about A.D. 1290, it was captured by the Seljoocides. In A.D. 1390, Philadelphia remained the last Christian city which had not been taken by the Turks; but it was then taken by Bajazet. It is now a considerable town, containing ruins of its ancient wall, and of about twenty-four churches. . . . Of the whole population, which is about 15,000, fully a third are Christians of the Greek Church, of which there is a Bishop of Philadelphia, with about fifteen Churches. The Christians have still the free exercise of their religion." The well-known words of Gibbon are very striking, and would have been very much more so if the cities, and not the Churches, had been referred to in these epistles:—"The captivity or ruin of the seven Churches of Asia was consummated, and the barbarous lords of Ionia and Lydia still trample on the monuments of classic and Christian antiquity. In the loss of Ephesus the Christians deplored the fall of the first angel, the extinction of the first candlestick of the Revelation. The desolation is complete; and the Temple of Diana or the Church of Mary will equally elude the search of the curious traveller. The circus and three stately theatres of Laodicea are now peopled with wolves and foxes. Sardis is reduced to a miserable village; and the God of Mohammed, without a rival or a Son, is invoked in the mosques of Thyatira and Pergamos; and the populousness of Smyrna is supported by foreign trade of the Franks and Armenians. Philadelphia alone has been saved by prophecy or courage. At a distance from the sea, forgotten by the emperors, encompassed by the Turks, her valiant citizens defended their religion and freedom above four-score years, and at length capitulated with the proudest of the Ottomans. Among the Greek colonies and Churches of Asia, Philadelphia is still erect—a column in a scene of ruins—a pleasing example that the paths of honour and safety may sometimes be the same." The Churches of Philadelphia and Smyrna form a somewhat similar pair in this, that both escaped all censure. In keeping with this, we find the state of the cities in the present day.

2. *"These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth and none shall shut, and shutteth and none openeth."*

Here the great Head of the Christian Church most calmly and most solemnly presents Himself in all the glory of His Divine and essentially true and holy character, and in all the grandeur of His mediatorial authority and power. The words are so far borrowed from Isaiah xxii. 22, "And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder: and he shall open and none shall shut; and he shall shut and none shall open." The key is symbolical of government, not in the hand, but upon the shoulder. So, in Isaiah ix. 6, and directly of Christ, "And the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Here, the government is not of the Church alone, but of the entire world—nay, it includes what is claimed by Christ in chap. i. 18, "the keys of Hades and of Death,"—in fact, what He claimed before His ascension, "all power in heaven and on earth." Well, therefore, might these Philadelphians and all other Christians most earnestly and reverentially listen.

3. *"I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee a door opened, which none can shut, because thou hast a little power, and didst keep My word, and didst not deny My Name."*

(1) All here is favourable. There is no censure; the praise is both positive and negative,—that of keeping Christ's word, a very great thing, and that of not denying His Name, which, in certain circumstances, is also a very great and often a very costly thing. These Christians needed all the strength or power which they possessed, and which is not very highly estimated, called "a little strength or power." Alford renders, "because thou hast little power," meaning, "thy strength is but small." In this case, the real import would appear by no means unsuitable, and might be put thus,—“because, though thou hast but little power, thou didst keep My word, and didst not deny My Name,” suggesting the severer trial and the truer fidelity. Therefore would Jesus the more surely come to their aid, and, by His all-sufficient power, at once open a door before them, and so keep it open that no power could shut it. We are disposed, however, to keep by the Authorised Version. The meaning will then be, that, as they had some little power, some measure of spiritual energy, through continued union with Christ and dependence on His Spirit, and as they had faithfully used their opportunities in the past,—keeping “His word” and not denying “His Name,”

—He had secured to them “an open door” or “a door opened” for further usefulness. “To them that have shall be given.” The liberties of this Church seem never to have been really taken away for these many centuries. The door seems widely open still. The words of Gibbon, above quoted, appear so far at least to give the key. In Philadelphia, the Christians doubtless, like the Greek Church generally, stand much in need of a thoroughly New Testament revival and renovation. This they may yet enjoy; and this apostolic and unextinguished candlestick may be destined to give the richest and purest light to the world for many an age to come.

(2) We need not say that the clause in question is treated in the Revised Version as parenthetical,—(“Behold, I have set before thee a door opened, which none can shut.”) In this way the preceding and following words are connected thus,—“I know thy works, that thou hast a little power,” etc. This seems by no means natural. The parenthesis seems not at all suitable. If introduced, it would seem to come in more fitly after the clause which follows. Further, we have the like expression below,—“because thou didst keep the word of My patience,” thus apparently proving the real force of the *ὅτι* to be the same in both cases—namely, “because,” and not, as in the Revised Version, “that” in the one case and “because” in the other. We might add, that, by throwing the words into a parenthesis, any reason for so great an act of favour and blessing to this Church, whatever such might be, is, to say the least, made not to appear.

4. “Behold, I will give of the synagogue of Satan, of them which say they are Jews, and they are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.” These formed the same party as that referred to in the epistle to the Church in Smyrna. They would not prevail over the faithful in Smyrna: the faithful in Philadelphia would prevail over them, or, rather, Jesus would so overcome some of them, as to lead them to acknowledge that these faithful ones were true Jews, Jews in the true spiritual sense, a portion of the true Israel of God. We have been at a loss to decide as to whether these false pretenders were literally Jews, or simply a portion of those Judaistic and Judaising Christians, who were so troublesome to the early Churches, and who were so hostile to the Apostle Paul as to deny his authority and to endeavour to turn even his own converts against him. The words here used would rather seem to prove that this party was intended. We may suppose them to have moved still farther in the same wrong direction, and to have done all they could

to bring real Christians into bad repute even among the surrounding heathen. Jesus engages to deal rightly with them. In convincing them of His love to these faithful disciples, He would convince them that these despised ones were true Christians or Christian Israelites, would thus humble them and make them come and worship along with them, as if at their very feet—thus exalting and honouring those whom they had hated, and, as stated in the epistle to the Church in Smyrna, “blasphemed,” or in every way calumniated before.

5. “*Because thou didst keep the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which is about to come upon the whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.*”

(1) Protection will reward fidelity. “The word of My patience” is a very fine and striking expression. These Philadelphians had been tried severely; and they had stood the appointed test. They did not need to be tried by the terrible coming storm. They had suffered through the opposition of the false pretenders just referred to, and of the surrounding heathen world; and now it is promised that they shall not suffer along with these, or along with the whole world. At least, if they suffered persecution, they would take no real harm from it. It would only purify the more; and, by the exercise of all Christian virtue, and especially this patience which Christ so highly prizes and commends, they would rise to a higher state of likeness to Christ and to greater influence among men.

(2) This great and seemingly universal trial or temptation here spoken of, it seems difficult to determine. From that date, and through many ages, the inhabitants of the Roman world, which may be especially, if not exclusively referred to, may be said to have been tried to the utmost, and made to suffer through the terrible convulsions of the Empire, and through the destructive invasions of the northern hordes. For a time, indeed, the Empire enjoyed not a little peace and prosperity. Still, the whole history of Europe and of the East has been to a vast extent a history of wars and rumours of wars, a history of the triumph of might over right. For ages, and through patient testimony, Christianity advanced from victory to victory, and seemed about to achieve the conquest of the whole world, when on the one hand Mohammedanism, and on the other the predicted apostasy, gradually extended, checked the real progress of the Gospel, and introduced such a state of things as might well be described as a great and terrible temptation, truly fitted to try all the dwellers upon the earth. From that temptation it is indeed a great blessing to be Divinely kept.

6. *"I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown."*

Once more, we have the awakening note of warning, "I come quickly." If all Christians, at all times and in all places, gave good and constant heed to it, it would be well for them and well for mankind. Here there is no voice of threatening. The continued well-being of this Church is simply sought. All must continue faithful to the end—they must yield to no temptation. If called to suffer, they will not have to suffer long. Jesus will soon come. Virtually He says over again, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Every true Christian may be viewed as a king, and so as already possessed of a crown: or, every Christian may be regarded as a soldier, who has a crown in prospect, and who must fight and overcome, if he would actually possess it. In either case, he is called upon to hold fast what he now has, to persevere to the end, to retain full possession of the truth, carefully to do the work which his Leader may assign to him, and in every way to follow that Leader amidst all the encouragements and discouragements of this present life. He must thus, and otherwise, "let no one take his crown."

7. *"He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out thence no more: and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem which cometh down out of heaven from My God, and Mine own new name."*

(1) How rich and varied this great reward! The Christian conqueror, like Christ Himself, seems destined to be crowned with many crowns. Here Christ holds out one after another; and all excel in beauty and glory. How grand the purpose of God to glorify His redeemed family through Jesus Christ! The conqueror shall be made a pillar in the temple of God,—shall become most useful to those who form this glorious and spiritual temple; and he himself shall never go out from thence,—he will form a precious and perpetual portion of it. Jesus will write on him, thus a pillar, the name of His God,—will make him such that he will appear so godlike as also to appear to be assuredly a son of God. Jesus will write on him the name of the city of His God,—he will be, and appear to be, a true citizen of the Heavenly Jerusalem, one with all the features which prove the second and heavenly birth. He will have all the infallible marks of a son of God and an heir of heaven. He will thus enjoy all the glory of Divine sonship, and all the rights and privileges of heavenly citizenship. Within this

new and eternal city he shall find a blessed and eternal home. How beautifully Jesus introduces again and again "of My God," as if not only to set forth the exaltation and blessedness of the conqueror, but to express the idea that, in all this exceeding glory, the conqueror through Christ would be closely and eternally associated with Christ. Hence, we might say, the character of the last crown here promised :—"And," Jesus adds, "mine own new name"; making him as if actually and for ever one with Christ Himself. This name is elsewhere said to be known to Christ alone. As a significant name it is just that which is best expressive of the object named, whether person or thing; we seem led to infer, that that name is equivalent to the true and glorious self-consciousness of Jesus, and therefore known only to Himself. So also the new name of the Christian conqueror. It, too, is said to be known only to himself. But why, in both cases, called new—a new name? *In the case of the Christian this would seem simple. He would have the consciousness of a new nature, a new character, or of being a new man in Christ Jesus. In the case of Christ, the new name would seem to refer to the consciousness of what He became and of what He did after the time of His humiliation and sufferings and sacrificial death, His new and endless and glorious life in heaven, as the mediatorial King of His people, and the Conqueror of the world.

8. "*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches.*" If we simply identify the words of Jesus, in the promise just made, with those of the Gracious Spirit, well may all attend to them, and ask that that Spirit may incline and enable them to hold fast, that no one may so tempt them as to rob them of such a crown.

VII.—THE EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH IN LAODICEA.

Rev. iii. 14-22.

"And to the angel of the Church in Laodicea write :—These things saith the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the Creation of God: I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and am become wealthy, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched one, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of Me gold refined by fire, that thou mayest become rich; and white garments,

that thou mayest clothe thyself, and (that) the shame of thy nakedness be not made manifest; and eyesalve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I reprove and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me. He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit with Me in My throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with My Father in His throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches."

1. "*To the angel of the Church in Laodicea write.*"

The city of Laodicea was of considerable wealth and importance, not far from Colosse and Hierapolis, with which Paul associates it in Col. iv. 13. "It was situated in the valley of the Mæander, on a small river called the Lycus, and was the capital of greater Phrygia, and the residence of a Roman governor. . . Its trade was considerable. . . In subsequent times it became a Christian city of eminence, the see of a bishop, and a meeting-place of Councils. . . Laodicea is wholly in ruins, utterly desolate: not a vestige of a Christian Church, not a Christian, is to be found there. It is called by the Turks, Eski Hissar, the Old Castle."

2. "*These things saith the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the Creation of God.*" Here again the description befits the end in view. Christ expresses a most solemn truth by means of the first descriptive word, "The Amen," the One who wills and changes not: His decisions are absolute, final, irreversible, like those of the Eternal God. He is, further, "The Faithful and True Witness." He is so in many respects, both with regard to God and with regard to man. He gives an example of this in His true and faithful words to this Church. He is also "the Beginning of the Creation of God." Some would accordingly view Him as a Creature, yet the most exalted of creatures. However, He here raises Himself above all creation, and makes Himself the first Principle, the uncreated Origin, of the whole creation of God. "By Him," we are elsewhere told, "God made the worlds," and also, "without Him was not anything made that hath been made." All beings and all things are in His Almighty hand.

3. "*I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of My mouth.*" He knew all about them, their inner as well as their outward life. They had lost, like the Ephesians, their first love, but to a far greater extent. Their heart was divided between Christ and the world,

They would not part with Him; and yet they set their affections on it. Most likely they were little aware of their real state. They may even have thought that they loved and served Christ wonderfully well. Theirs had become, as stated, a lukewarm religion, just the very religion which all religion, however fervent at first, is in great danger of becoming. The growth of the love of the world and the decay of the love of Christ and of God go on together. The Laodiceans knew that they needed Christ; and so they adhered to Him. They too much loved Him for their own sake; and they too little loved Him for His own sake. Their hearts were preoccupied, devoted to the world, full of the riches and pleasures of the world. They were not warm or hot towards Him. Their return for His mighty love towards them had become to His heart most painfully small. As implied, the sight of it was sickening—so far at least as His own satisfaction was concerned, He would have them to be either cold or hot: rather hot than cold, yet rather cold than lukewarm or neither. He cannot endure them in their present state. If they so continue, He will cast them from Him as a sickening thing. How fearful the figurative words, "I will spew thee out of My mouth"! O how many such Laodiceans are and ever have been within the pale of the Christian Church! How much Christ has to endure from His own people! What patience! What forbearance! How we try the very heart of Him who loves us best! Well may we every day breathe forth to Jesus Himself the words—

"Lord! it is my chief complaint,
That my love is weak and faint;
Yet I love Thee, and adore—
O for grace to love Thee more!"

4. "*Because thou sayest, I am rich and am become wealthy, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched one, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of Me gold refined by fire, that thou mayest become rich; and white garments, that thou mayest clothe thyself, and (that) the shame of thy nakedness be not made manifest; and eyesalve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see.*"

(1) Here, then, is clearly implied room for repentance and full recovery. The evil is for the most part traced to proud, deceptive self-sufficiency. He treats them as in fearful darkness, and yet all the while thinking themselves in fullest light. How terrible the blinding power of sin! They are in the deepest poverty, and yet

imagine themselves to be immensely rich. They are in need of all real good, and yet suppose that they have all good and are in need of nothing. They mistake midnight for midday. How dim and short-sighted the eyes of the worldly-wise! How clear and far-seeing the eyes of simple-minded spiritual babes!

(2) The most patient and compassionate Redeemer, instead of casting them off, deigns to counsel the Laodiceans to come back to Him—to come for all they really need, nay, for all the good they can possibly possess and enjoy. Ingratitude and indifference will be overlooked. He would restore them to richest grace and fullest love. Still, He speaks to them and counsels them as He would the world at large. He does so in His own most wonderful manner. They are absolutely poor, and yet He calls upon them to buy as if they were rich. How great the paradoxes of the Bible! Here is one of them: the poorest is counselled to purchase an estate of infinite value. Does He not speak as one who mocketh? Far from it! In the words of the Evangelical Prophet, He really means to say, "Come and buy: yea, come and buy without money and without price." Yes, Christ gives freely and fully; and all for nothing. He bestows infinite wealth on all who are simply and sincerely willing to receive it. *First*, He gives the purest gold and makes them inconceivably rich,—all the rich blessings of salvation treasured up in Himself, or Himself with all His unsearchable wealth. *Secondly*, "White garments," "robes of righteousness," "garments of salvation,"—all righteousness, all sanctification, all graces and virtues, all to be found in and through Himself. *Thirdly*, Eyesalve,—the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of all grace and illumination, the Spirit of all revelation in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. All these three may be summed up in one, even in Jesus as made all in all of God and of the Holy Spirit.

5. "*As many as I love, I reprove and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.*" How wonderful! He yet loves them, and seeks their eternal good. It is because He loves, that He reproves, threatens, chastens, counsels, invites, and would restore. For these and all such there is yet hope. Timely repentance is alone required. Yet, in so inveterate a case, earnestness is needed. He would still re-enter these indifferent hearts. Hence—

6. "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock: If any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.*" Never man so spake. This is indeed the voice of God, and not of man. The implied conception could not have entered the mind of man or of angel. It is the voice of the

Crucified, of the Glorified, of the God-Man, Jesus Christ. It is one of the finest invitations in the Bible. Millions have thanked Jesus for these words—millions will continue to thank Him for them to the end of time and for ever and ever. Here, we have a text of texts for preachers, a call of calls for sinners, an encouragement of encouragements for saints, a visit of visits to all from the highest and holiest, the most lowly and loving of all in the wide Universe! Who would not open! who would not welcome! who would not receive infinite wealth! who would not give a feast to Jesus! who would not feast with Him! Every one, the poorest and most degraded, can give a rich and delightful feast to God, to Christ, by simply welcoming this wonderful One, who stands at his door and knocks.

7. "*He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit with Me in My throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with My Father in His throne.*" Here we reach the climax of blessing and reward. Christ, as the greatest Conqueror, rises to the highest place. He is the one grand Example to all soldiers and conquerors. His was the most glorious and most terrible war. All the powers of evil were arrayed against Him: Satan assailed Him; all human society opposed Him. The greatest of all self-sacrifices had to be made by Him. Yet, no power or combination of powers could prevail. He conquered through His whole life. He alone triumphed over all temptation and sin. He alone perfectly glorified God on earth, and perfectly finished the work which His Father had given Him to do. With His dying breath He could say, "It is finished." Above all, He conquered through His very death. Therefore, as He here says, has He been so highly exalted, even to His Father's throne. He is One with His Father and God. So He most wonderfully promises that the Christian conqueror, the man who conquers through Him, shall rise to this exalted state of blessedness and power and glory, to oneness with Himself and with God for ever and ever.

8. "*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches.*" Once more, and now for the last time, this mighty call goes forth. Well may all Christians and Christian Churches hear and obey! Well may these seven most precious epistles be the study and the meditation of every age! They have been sent as if direct from heaven and from the Saviour-King of mankind. Blessed, indeed, all who read them, all who imbibe their pure and living spirit, all who follow Jesus, as they teach and encourage all who listen to their solemn warnings and act accordingly, all who are

led by them to "fight the good fight of faith," to practise all needful self-command and self-denial, all who are induced by them to cling to the Crucified in every hour of temptation, and to seek the promised and most needful aid of the Blessed Spirit of God, all who are thus enabled to conquer through Jesus Christ, and so to rise to the full height of blessedness and glory here presented by the great Captain to the eye of every conqueror.

TRANSITIONAL NOTE ON CHAPTERS I., II., III.

1. We have now treated of these three great chapters. We have again and again viewed their value as perfectly inestimable. They are an exhaustless mine of purest gold, even of the gold of the kingdom of heaven. All along we have thought of them, not solely as thus in themselves transcendently excellent, but also as of greatest importance in their relation to the entire and most wonderful Book of which they may be justly regarded as the Divinely-intended introduction. The first chapter is in one sense complete in itself, and may be, as it often has been, studied by itself, and expounded and made use of accordingly. The like may be said of the second and third chapters viewed as a whole. However, in both cases, the completeness just hinted at is not that of separate organic bodies, but that of each of the various organs which are all inseparably united in one and the same living frame.

2. In this introductory part we are led to contemplate Jesus Christ, here gloriously and unerringly self-revealed, both in His own Person, and in His relation as well to His own kingdom as to mankind at large.

(1) We have a self-revelation of Christ viewed simply by Himself. Of course an absolutely perfect self-revelation of an Infinite Being to finite beings is utterly impossible. All that He deemed it needful for us to know, He has fully made known. We need not say to how great an extent this self-revelation has assumed a figurative or symbolical form. Assuredly, this was the fittest and best form, else it would not have been employed. Christ thus presents Himself as if living, moving, speaking, and acting before the very eyes of those who read the words of these three great chapters.

(2) We have a self-revelation of Christ viewed in His twofold relation to His own kingdom and to all the nations of the earth. He presents Himself as the Mediatorial King or Royal High Priest over the former. He walks among the golden candlesticks, and holds the stars in His right hand, as the one and only Head of all

the many Churches, which, though organically complete in themselves, combine to form His one glorious and universal Church. He alone is the Head of each ; He alone is the Head of all.

3. This twofold self-revelation of Christ must be kept in view by all who would rightly study the remaining chapters of this Book, or who would intelligently study the history of the Christian Church from the time of the Apocalypse to the present day, or who would form a correct and Scriptural judgment of the many Churches and multiform religion of these observant and reflective times. Is the Christ of these chapters the Christ of these Churches ? Is He the centre, the source, the life, the all in all of that religion ? Through the advance of the Church, or through the rich and varied progress of the world, has this self-revelation proved itself in any sense unreal, imperfect, or inadequate to meet the wants of the higher minds, the purer hearts, the loftier spirits of any of the intervening ages, or of this most advanced, this most highly cultured and enlightened age of ours ? Who dare so to say ? Rather, is not this age, with all its religion, and with all its science and philosophy, far, far behind what the Christ of these chapters would, if truly and fully followed, have assuredly made it ? We speak of the resources of civilisation. They are certainly vast ; yet, what would they have been unless for the resources of Christianity ? And what of these ? Have they been exhausted ? No. They have hardly begun to be known, to be appreciated, to be applied. Christ has been before every age—He is still before ours ; He has been before every Christian and every Church—He is so still. This demonstrates His Divinity. This tells us to examine ourselves, to examine the character of all Churches, to judge of all men and of all institutions, in the light of this glorious, this absolutely needful, this enlightening and inspiring self-revelation.

4. From these three chapters we may gather the true idea or perfect ideal of a Christian Church,—a Church most excellent in itself,—a Church well-pleasing to Christ and to God,—a Church most useful to mankind,—a Church presenting the very model and standard by which all Churches of former or present times may be justly judged, approved more or less highly, or condemned more or less surely. In this way we shall be prepared to see, in the light of this Book, how far the Church of Christ has been corrupted and even paganised,—how far Christ has been cast out of His own temple, or how far that temple has been, as predicted, turned into a den of thieves,—or how far the Divine and only true and living Head has been set aside to make room for another lord or other

lords, who have dared to usurp His throne. In this way, too, we shall be able to judge as to how far the Churches have been returning to their true and living Head, and as to what all Christians should seek to do in order that the Church or all the Churches may rise to that purity, to that place and to that power, which may be truly said to have been intended by Christ, and which we find promised and prophetically described in the closing portion of this Book.

5. If we would gather, as we have said, the true idea of a Christian Church from these epistles, we must simply gather into one all the praises or commendations of Jesus. These will greatly help us in our endeavour. The complaints and the censures and the threatenings will render still further aid. All combined, if spiritually discerned and fitly joined together, will supply the desired and invaluable conception. At least, as we so proceed, and as at the same time we grow more and more Christian ourselves, the knowledge sought will gradually and more and more correctly dawn upon our minds. These things will assuredly be found. *First.* Christ will be supremely and intensely loved and obeyed. *Secondly.* Good works, works of faith and love, will abound. *Thirdly.* Every form of known evil will be forsaken and condemned and opposed. *Fourthly.* The Word, the Truth, the Gospel of Christ, will be fully and faithfully maintained, loved, witnessed. *Fifthly.* As again and again said, Christ will be the one and only loved and acknowledged Head of the Church, or of every Church now contemplated. *Sixthly.* As already implied, the members will be true and living Christians, twice-born. *Seventhly.* Each Church must thus be, and appear to be, a part of that New Jerusalem which cometh down from heaven.

III.

CHAPTERS IV., V., VI., VII.

GENERAL VIEW OF THE REDEMPTIVE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN, FROM PRIMITIVE TO MILLENNIAL TIMES.

1. It may be well, in the outset, to note the close connection between this and the vision of the Royal High Priest and golden candlesticks or emblems of the Christian Church. Though no verbal reference is made to either tabernacle or temple, these emblems directly remind us of the outer compartment or Holy Place; and, as the same emblems are declared to represent Churches then existent in this world, seven Churches representative of all Churches, we are led to the conclusion that it is designed that we should regard the Holy Place as symbolic of the redemptive kingdom, viewed as on earth, and the Most Holy Place as symbolic of the same kingdom viewed as in heaven. The two parts composed one whole, with no more than the symbolic veil between them. All the priests had access to the one; only the High Priest had access to the other, and that only once a year. However the veil might intercept the vision of the inner shrine, it did not imply any real or absolute separation between them. Though emblematic of the imperfection of the Mosaic dispensation, it allowed the High Priest to enter into what was emblematic at once of the immediate presence of Jehovah and of the heavenly world. There was, then, a way from the one to the other; clearly setting forth the glorious fact that heaven and earth are in one sense one, that a way is open from the one to the other, that the true High Priest has fullest and freest access to both—or that, being Divine as well as human, He may live and act in both at one and the same time, or may be viewed as thus living and acting in both, on earth and in heaven, through all time. Hence, whilst, as we have seen, He appears in the one, and in the midst of the candlesticks, and in a form befitting the state and character of the Church on

earth, He here, as we shall see, appears in the other in a form equally befitting, not yet the state and character of the perfected and glorified Church in heaven, but rather His own position and office there in full and constant connection with His work in this world.

2. By these remarks we wish most emphatically to set forth the real or spiritual unity of the kingdom of Christ, whether in this or in the unseen state. That kingdom is but one and the same kingdom, with one and the same King, however truly made up of two distinct parts,—the one often called the Kingdom of Grace, and the other the Kingdom of Glory; whilst both, as one and truly indivisible, are again and again called in Scripture the Kingdom of Heaven. This must be well kept in view if we would enter into the spirit or understand certain of the most important parts of this Book of Apocalypse.

3. Whilst we would thus closely connect this with the vision of the first chapter, we would remember that the epistles of the second and third chapters seem evidently designed, as they are fitted, to give a practical illustration of what is symbolised by the Royal High Priest walking amidst the golden candlesticks, by setting before our minds, we might say before our very eyes, that High Priest actually tending and faithfully dealing with the seven Churches, and thus with all Churches. He is to be contemplated as truly on earth now, as in the days of His flesh, and as truly dealing with both Church and world as if He were visibly present everywhere. As we have endeavoured to show, we find in these chapters not only a revelation of the Priestly King, but also an ideal of a Christian Church, truly good in itself and well-pleasing to Him.

I.

CHAPTER IV.

VISION OF JEHOVAH, THE GOD OF SALVATION.

Rev. iv. 1—11.

1. *Ver. 1.* "After these things I saw, and behold, a door opened in heaven, and the first voice which I heard (a voice) as of a trumpet speaking with me, saying, Come up hither, and I will show thee the things which must come to pass hereafter."

(1) "*After these things.*" Here the reference seems to be, not to the succession of the events or scenes previously spoken of, but to that of John's vision of them. It is well to note this, as the same expression is often used, whilst it is apt to lead us to conclude that

the succession of the events revealed is meant, and not the mere sequence of the visions or revelations. We must judge by the context as to which is really intended.

(2) "*I saw, and behold a door opened in heaven.*" This door corresponded to the veiled opening between the Holy and the Most Holy Place of the Temple, as we have already indicated. The whole scene corresponds to that of the sixth chapter of Isaiah. In both cases we have a vision of the heavenly world, in keeping with the Temple-scenery on the one hand, and as illustrative of the close and direct connection between heaven and earth on the other. We find some taking the word literally, and not as descriptive of a vision, or seemingly regarding John as actually taken up to heaven and actually seeing what the vision represents. This open door seems undoubtedly to imply a special revelation of God, of heaven, of truths relating to the kingdom of Christ. It certainly implies that "the way into the holiest of all was" now "made manifest," that the revelation is complete, that Jesus is the true and living way to God, that there is an actual way from earth to heaven. In fact, John so enters and so describes all that he saw, that all may now know all that was made known to him.

(3) "*And the first voice which I heard (a voice) as of a trumpet speaking with me, saying.*" We have already treated of this voice, and regarded it as that of Jesus Christ. This introduction of this same trumpet-voice confirms what we have said of the close connection between this and the vision of the High Priest, and so of the two scenes, the earthly and the heavenly aspects of the one kingdom of heaven.

(4) "*Come up hither, and I will show thee the things which must come to pass hereafter.*" In vision, not in reality, John enters heaven, heaven viewed in its relation to the redemptive kingdom on earth, and to the world of mankind in its connection with that kingdom. The great invisible and eternal King, with all the heavenly agencies whose part it is to promote the redemptive work of Christ on earth, are unveiled to his ecstatic vision. The future is to be revealed. Still, and even in order to this, we shall find, as we advance, that not a little relates to the past—nay, to the remote past. This should be marked, if we would so understand this Book as to be able to appreciate the intended display of the successive dispensations of redemptive grace as they are more largely set forth in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

2. Vers. 2, 3. "Straightway I was in the Spirit: and behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and One sitting upon the throne, and He that

sat (was) to look upon like a jasper stone and a sardius : and there was a rainbow round about the throne, like an emerald to look upon."

(1) "*Straightway I was in the Spirit,*"—the same expression as that used before, and implying a new and further inspiration. Just as Jesus appeared amidst the golden candlesticks, symbolically represented as what He is to the Church and to the world, so God is here symbolically represented as what He is to the redemptive kingdom and to the universe at large. In tracing all to the Spirit, John expressly sets aside all idea of mere imagination or of genius in the writing of this wonderful Book.

(2) "*And behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and One sitting upon the throne.*" We need not say that a throne is a fine and appropriate emblem of ruling authority and power. Among men, we very properly find a material throne, not only thus emblematic, but, on state occasions, in actual use by the king. The analogy of the Divine and human here appears, as everywhere in Scripture, and, we may say, in all religious literature. The throne was not set or placed there to indicate the beginning of a new reign, or any special regal act, but simply to set forth the government of Him who was sitting upon it. All is to be viewed analogically, and not literally. We cannot suppose a visible material throne occupied by a spiritual invisible Being. The grand idea set forth is, that Jehovah is a great King, and, as thus in heaven, the universal King. Some have refused to acknowledge the kingly character of Jehovah, as if they would thus set aside a mistaken and injurious anthropomorphism. However, we cannot possibly avoid the comparison of God to those who, in some high sense, resemble Him. He so acts, and He so stands in like relationship to His rational creatures, that we cannot but view Him as a Father. So in the case of a king. If He acts, and cannot but act, towards His creatures as a king towards his subjects, however imperfect in many respects the implied comparison, we cannot but think and speak of Him as a King. Heaven being the region where, according to all Scripture, He specially dwells or acts and reveals Himself, His throne thus in heaven implies the universality of His reign. We might here dwell upon the grand and cheering idea of a Divine throne, especially of such a throne as this really is—a throne of purest and most perfect justice, and yet a throne of boundless grace and mercy. We now like to call it the Throne of Grace. In ancient times, and as placed in the Tabernacle or Temple, it was finely called "the Mercy-seat." "The Throne of God" is an

expression full of meaning, rich in association, and fitted to suggest the most precious and cheering truth. Thus it suggests the unity of the whole creation or entire universe,—the control of all worlds, and all the elements of nature in every world,—the Divine origin, government and end of all things; the moral rule of this our race; the gracious protection which all need; the foundation of that universal kingdom of which the mediatorial kingdom is a special form and an important part.

(3) "*And He that sat (was) to look upon like a jasper stone and a sardius.*" Thus are the presence and the perfection of the great King symbolised. The seer beheld what had all the crystalline brightness of the jasper of this Book (ch. xxi. 11), combined or mingled with the glowing redness of the sardius; the two seemingly expressive of the glorious perfection just alluded to, including the glory and the grace, the majesty and the mercy, the holiness and the justice of the Eternal God and Saviour.

(4) "*And there was a rainbow round about the throne, like an emerald to look upon.*" How beautiful this arch of soft and delicate green over and around the bright and dazzling symbol of the Divine presence, the Apocalyptic Shekinah on the throne. Here the prismatic colours, with all their varied beauty and splendour, are exchanged for the most befitting colour of all, a beautiful green, the most pleasing in nature to the eye of man, the old emblem of grace and mercy, the appointed token of the covenant between God and man from the time of Noah to the end of the world, in reality of the covenant of redemption; carrying us back to the recovery of the race from the destructive Flood, and illustrating what we have said of the whole sum and course of redemptive truth and grace as set forth symbolically in this Book.

3. *Ver. 4.* "And round about the throne (were) four and twenty thrones: and upon the thrones I saw four and twenty elders sitting, arrayed in white garments; and on their heads crowns of gold."

(1) These seats or thrones suggest royalty, though subordinate to that implied by the central throne. The same is suggested by the golden crowns. Some suppose that this scene represents a special council in actual session. However, as all the occupants of these thrones are again and again referred to, we rather suppose it to set forth a regular and permanent relationship.

(2) There has been considerable diversity of opinion as to these four and twenty elders. Of course they are no more to be regarded as real personages than are the four living creatures afterwards

spoken of. That they represent the redeemed Israel of God seems the only admissible idea. Their very name appears sufficient proof of this. "The golden bowls full of incense," which they had in their hands, we are told, "are the prayers of the saints,"—seemingly implying the representative character of those who presented them. If we remember that, in the one Person of Jesus Christ, the Great High Priest, the whole ancient priesthood was realised, and thus for ever set aside, whilst also the Holy of Holies, the place symbolising that occupied by these elders, was opened or unveiled by Him, we shall at once infer that they cannot be of the priestly class at all, except in the sense in which all saints are priests. This is further evident from the fact, that only the High Priest, the special type of Christ, had access to the Most Holy Place. If these elders had appeared in the outer temple, the case might have been different. We might then have reasoned, These elders, as having access to the Tabernacle or Temple, must be of sacerdotal character. They, therefore, may be, as has been supposed, the four and twenty "princes of the sanctuary," "princes of God," the appointed chiefs of the four and twenty orders of priesthood, referred to in 1 Chron. xxiii., xxiv., as appointed by David. However, as these had not access to the inner temple here alluded to, they seem evidently to be set aside. In fact, the elders of Israel, whatever they were originally, had no place in either Tabernacle or Temple. Whom, then, do they represent? and why four and twenty in number? The early view has been accepted by not a few—namely, that they represented the entire Church of the Old and New Testaments, the twelve Patriarchs and twelve Apostles. This seems by no means fanciful, and would well account for the number here given.

If we accept the general idea, as we seem warranted to do, that these elders represent the redeemed or the whole Israel of God, whether the patriarchs were really intended or not, nothing can well appear more natural than that both typical and spiritual Israel, or the saints under both dispensations, should be represented. It has been thought that the promise of Christ, that His Apostles should "sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel," very decidedly commends this view. In this we fully agree; and would at once say that we know of no valid objection to it. It might, indeed, be said, John himself was one of these Apostles, and so cannot have been represented as at once having the vision and forming a conspicuous part of it. However, John had the vision, not as the Apostle, but as an inspired prophet of Jesus Christ. We may observe, however, that we do not seem bound to hold that the

Apostles were here represented, viewed individually and exclusively as Apostles, and not as to some considerable extent representative of the entire class of apostolic men, who were really inspired by God and used by the Holy Spirit in laying the foundation of the Christian Church. Our reason for so remarking will appear again.

In the meantime, what of the remaining twelve? Viewed simply as at the head of the twelve tribes, the Patriarchs might well be used representatively of these tribes down to the time of Christ. However, we find that they may be said to have been represented, at the time of the formation of Israel into a nation, or at the institution of the Sinaitic economy, by twelve princes of these tribes, who acted again and again, both at and after the giving of the Law, as actual and acknowledged representatives as well as rulers of these twelve tribes of Israel. Now, as we find in Rev. i. 5, 6, the words "made us a kingdom, priests," an allusion to this very time in which Israel, if faithful, would be "a kingdom of priests," it seems more natural to suppose a reference here to the princes of the tribes who acted so far along with Moses as did the Apostles with Christ, than to go back to the time of the Patriarchs, and thus long before Israel, through the deliverance from bondage and consequent organisation into a nation, became really typical of the kingdom of Christ or true Israel of God. If either the Patriarchs or these princes of Israel are to be regarded as here intended, we would say of them, as we have said of the Apostles, that we should not strictly and exclusively view them as the actual princes of Israel, but rather as representative of the aggregate rulers of Israel, and that under those, whether judges or kings, who represented the Supreme Ruler Himself, and were therefore said to sit on the throne of Jehovah.

We seem thus to approach nearer the solution of our question. We have got the ruling powers of ancient Israel under Jehovah, and the like ruling powers of the Christian Church under Christ, representatives of the twelve tribes of Israel literal and spiritual, therefore rightly four and twenty in number, rightly called elders, and at the same time rightly occupying four and twenty thrones around and subordinate to the great central throne, which, in the vision of John, was first occupied by Jehovah alone, and then, as we have suggested, on the transition from the covenant with the literal Israel to the covenant with the spiritual, became the "throne of Jehovah and the Lamb." If no better can be had, this would seem a solution of our question not lightly to be set aside. However, we think that it must be considerably modified in order to meet the whole facts of the case. Thus we find these elders, introduced again and again, were acting

the part of interpreters to John. We cannot, then, regard them as representing the merely ruling powers of Israel, especially of ancient Israel. We have spoken of Apostles or apostolic men as fully and divinely inspired. In this we may find the key to our remaining difficulty.

That all the elders were inspired, seems inferable from the very place in which they appeared—namely, in heaven. John, when called, “Come up hither, and I will show thee the things which must come to pass hereafter,” at once adds, “Straightway I was in the Spirit,”—he was under the Spirit of revelation. Thus he entered heaven, and was in heaven. The inspired rulers of the kingdom of heaven may, like John (one of them), when viewed simply as thus inspired, and not regarded solely as an Apostle, be represented, like those elders, as enthroned in heaven. Through their inspired instructions they continue to teach and to rule the Israel of God to the end of time. Who, then, are the inspired teachers and rulers of ancient Israel, who continue along with the Apostles or apostolic men of the Christian Church? The answer seems simple and infallibly certain. The Prophets of Israel. But it may be objected, why twelve in number? We cannot name or number the prophets, as we can name and number the Apostles. Be it so; yet let us not be mechanical or arithmetical in a matter of symbolical representation. Take Israel as a whole, then we must say simply, the Prophets of Israel. Let Israel, for the sake of typical or symbolic representation, be divided into the twelve Tribes of Israel, and then, for the same reason, these prophets may be divided into the like number and treated as the twelve Prophets of Israel, the real teachers of Israel; and, united with the apostolic men, the teachers and rulers of all Israel, Jewish and Gentile, the true Israel of God to the end of time. This would account for one of them acting as an interpreter to John. The prophets all point to the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, and to the self-sacrificing Lamb, as worthy to “open the Book,” or to sit on the right hand of Jehovah.

4. *Ver. 5.* “And out of the throne proceed lightnings and voices and thunders. And (there were) seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the Seven Spirits of God.”

(1) “*And out of the throne proceed lightnings and voices and thunders.*” The rainbow set forth the mild and merciful character and government of Him who sat upon the throne. These lightnings and voices and thunders set forth His more awful attributes, His punitive justice and the like. They naturally awaken awe, and

a sense of the glorious Majesty of the great King. He has the mightiest forces of nature at His command. The voices seem to suggest that all agencies needed to fulfil His designs, judicial or otherwise, are also ever ready to do His will. We are thus reminded of the awful revelation of Jehovah on Mount Sinai. The entire revelation of God from beginning to end of Scripture, and throughout the whole course of Providence or of the world's history, is one of mercy and of judgment, as we read in Isaiah of the Messiah being anointed to preach, not only "the acceptable year of the Lord," but also "the day of vengeance of our God."

(2) "*And (there were) seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the Seven Spirits of God.*" This emblem of the Holy Spirit, in His perfect character and manifold operations, we found alluded to, by way of anticipation, in chap. i. 4: "Grace to you and peace, from Him which is and which was and which is to come; and from the Seven Spirits which are before His throne; and from Jesus Christ,"—words which clearly prove that the Holy Spirit is here undoubtedly intended. These lamps of fire are sources of light and heat of which the Holy Spirit is the real origin. Christ was declared to baptise with the Holy Spirit and with fire, which seems to mean, as with fire, a penetrating, purifying fire, yet a fire which imparted new life, new energy, new warmth, new affection, new love, and at the same time consumed the old dross, and removed the impure, the corrupt, the sinful. The throne, before which these lamps appear, is the throne of grace, and therefore the work, specially assigned to the Spirit as symbolised by them, is that of saving grace, of illumination, of sanctification, of new-creation, of ministerial preparation, of general preparation for the service of time and the blessedness of eternity. We are told of the same lamps, in chap. v. 6, as appearing in a different form and under a different symbol; the Lamb being said to have "seven horns and seven eyes, which are the Seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth." Thus is the Holy Spirit declared to belong, in the economy of grace, to both Father and Son, and to be sent forth evidently by both,— "before the throne," as ready to do the Father's will who is on the throne, and "the horns and eyes of the Lamb," as ready to run everywhere in fulfilling His redemptive work. In so acting, this Divine Spirit must not be supposed to work in the way of grace and mercy alone, but to do all involved in the grand work of governing as well as converting the world. In Him may be said to be centred and wielded all that power in heaven and in earth

which Christ received of the Father, and by which He designed, as just said, to govern as well as to convert the world.

5. *Vers. 6—11.* "And before the throne, as it were a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, four living creatures full of eyes before and behind. And the first creature (was) like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face as of a man, and the fourth creature (was) like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, having each one of them six wings, are full of eyes round about and within; and they have no rest day and night saying, Holy, holy, holy, (is) the Lord God, the Almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come. And when the living creatures shall give glory and honour and thanks to Him that sitteth on the throne, to Him that liveth for ever and ever, the four and twenty elders shall fall down before Him that sitteth on the throne, and shall worship Him that liveth for ever and ever, and shall cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory, and the honour, and the power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they were, and were created."

(1) "*And before the throne, as it were a sea of glass.*" Here Alford says with apparent correctness,—"(not, '*glassy*': *ὡαλίην* describes, not the appearance, but the material, of the sea: it appeared like a sea of glass—so clear and so calm); *like to crystal* (and that not common glass,—but like rock crystal for transparency and beauty)." The "as it were" of the Revised Version is helpful towards a correct interpretation. It seems clearly to prove that the reference is not to the "brazen sea" of the outer tabernacle. Besides, that sea or basin was, as just said, in the outer, and not, as here, in the inner temple. The throne corresponds to the mercy-seat, and this pavement, which was "as it were a sea of glass," corresponded to the floor of the Tabernacle or Temple. In the East, polished floors were in high repute. The Scripture reference here is to one or other or both of the glorious manifestations of Jehovah to Moses and to Ezekiel:—Exod. xxiv. 10, "And they saw the God of Israel; and there was under His feet a paved work of sapphire stone, and as it were the very heaven for clearness;"—Ezekiel i. 22, 26, "And over the head of the living creature there was the likeness of a firmament like the colour of the terrible crystal . . . And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was a likeness as the appearance of a man upon it above." All harmonises with the words

before us; while two grand thoughts are suggested: *first*, the Divine Throne upheld by these living creatures, these cherubim, set forth as a chariot; and, *secondly*, the Throne or Divine Presence confined to no one place or region, but, like a chariot, moving everywhere: that is to say, Jehovah can appear and act in any place, in which He chooses to make His presence known and felt, by His appropriate treatment of His creatures. At the same time, the presence and action of the cherubim are connected with that throne, which is a mercy-seat or throne of grace, and not alone a throne of justice and judgment.

(2) "*And in the midst of the throne and round about the throne.*" Some have strangely supposed that these living creatures, as in the vision of Ezekiel, upheld the throne, and so were in great part under it; and this idea affects their view of the form of these beings, as their form, in such a case, could not be erect or human. However, the throne here is stationary, whilst these beings are free, and are clearly said to move and act. If the throne was square, or a complete circle, then we may assume that they occupied one place in front of the throne, one at each of what would appear to John the sides, and the fourth behind the throne. If we keep up the idea of the inner Temple, with the mercy-seat in the middle, the throne will then be circular; but if, as we may perhaps suppose, it was placed at the side or end, as in a state apartment of a royal palace, then the throne may be viewed as semicircular; and then, if two of these living ones stood in front, and one at each end of the semicircle, all would appear as here described, at once as "in the midst" or middle, "and round about the throne." If one had been behind, as some have thought, it would have been out of the sight of John. These cherubic figures would form an inner circle nearer the throne than the larger circle of the thrones of the elders. The centre of the throne would be the centre of both circles. The pavement, like a sea of glass, and clear as crystal, would be seen, not behind, but before the throne. On it the central and surrounding thrones would rest. On it, too, the living creatures and the elders and all other servants of the King would move—whilst it would appear simply as the resplendent and most appropriate floor of the glorious heavenly palace of the Great King. Palace is here perhaps more suitable than temple, as there is no temple in the New Jerusalem.

(3) "*Four living creatures,*" or living beings or living ones. As the elders represent the redeemed, these seem to represent the whole holy and unfallen world. From their place, their employment,

and their likeness to the cherubim or identity with them, we should naturally regard them as representing superhuman beings, and these holy and unfallen, as just said. Their number is suggestive of the world, or, we might say, the entire world or whole creation; and we naturally think of them as in some way representing the entire living world on earth, or the entire unfallen world of moral or angelic beings. Some prefer the former; and certainly their respective appearances might well suggest the sum of all animated nature in this our world. However, against this one thing seems fully decisive. We cannot suppose the sum of all earthly life, the human and sinful included, to be a perpetual fountain of such holy activity, such holy worship, and such ceaseless proclamation of the glorious holiness of God; and therefore we seem constrained to rise to the higher, purer and more godlike life of the perfect and sinless world of unfallen angelic or heavenly beings. But, it is argued, they are said to join in the song of their own redemption, as apparently implied in the next chapter. This has led some of the most learned and judicious to set aside the view above given of their unfallen character. However, we need hardly say, that the text adopted and translated in the Revised Version, and which had been accepted by some before, entirely sets aside this apparently invincible objection. According to the Authorised, both living creatures and elders appear to fall down before the Lamb, and to sing, "Thou art worthy . . . for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed *us* to God." According to the Revised, "Thou art worthy . . . for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with Thy blood (men) of every tribe." Here the "*us*" does not appear, and so the basis of the argument is removed.

In fact, so far as the New Version is concerned, in this place we find no proof of either living creatures or elders representing the redeemed, or being themselves of the redeemed, unless in so far as the prayers of the saints are presented by them; and this would appear more likely to be the office of the elders, whose white robes and golden crowns seem to mark them out as representatives of the saints or of the redeemed. Not only so, but, we may add that we have never regarded the Authorised Version as sufficient to prove the living creatures to be of the redeemed. The whole scope of Old Testament Scripture is against this. From the opening of Genesis onwards the cherubim or living creatures, which are assuredly the same as those of this chapter, are most certainly angelic, and not human. Even the use of "*us*," in the new song of redemption does not of necessity apply to any save the elders.

The living creatures and the elders have only to be viewed as here put together by a not uncommon construction, that of *zeugma*, under which two nouns are connected with the same verb, as if both were equally related to it, whilst it may be clear that only one can possibly be so. We may refer to one case in the Book of Jonah, which it would be simply ridiculous to treat as the words in question have been treated;—Jon. iii. 7, 8, "Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything: let them not feed, nor drink water: but let them be covered with sackcloth, both man and beast, and let them cry mightily to God." Here the language is very strong. Both man and beast are to cry mightily to God. At once we see the absurdity of taking this literally, especially as the use of the figure, *zeugma*, clearly indicates the intended meaning. So, we are no more bound by the construction to hold that both living creatures and elders are declared to sing the song referred to, than to hold that the king of Nineveh was so irrational as to decree that beasts as well as man were to cry mightily to God. We write thus that we may fully dispose of all argument based upon chap. v. 8–10, in behalf of the opinion that these living creatures as well as the elders must be numbered among the redeemed or viewed as representatives of them. Such seems the just and only right conclusion. As to these wonderful representative beings, we may add,—

a. In this Book they appear, as in the Old Testament, beings of vastly greater knowledge and power than those of any man, fallen or redeemed. If we take the Revised Version of "Come," not "Come and see," as correct, and if we regard this mighty call, addressed to all by them in chap. vi., as effectual, then their office as well as power must be regarded as transcendent indeed.

b. As representing the holy and unfallen creation, these beings are most fitly introduced here, as in Isaiah vi. 3, as ever crying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts."

c. As already hinted, we have full evidence as to the identity of these living creatures with the seraphim of Isaiah, the living creatures of Ezekiel, and the cherubim of the whole Bible. There can be no doubt as to a direct reference to the sublime vision of Isaiah. As to Ezekiel, we find him using, in Hebrew, a word or name exactly equivalent to the Greek word or name here used by John, חַיִּים, ζῶα, *living ones*. The descriptions of these creatures certainly imply various differences in the details; but this we might expect, when we consider their symbolic character on the one hand, and their different employments at different times and in different circumstances, on the other.

d. We find Ezekiel expressly identifying the living creatures with the cherubim: chap. x. 20, "This is the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel by the river Chebar; and I knew that they were cherubim." By thus identifying these living ones with the cherubim, the prophet warrants us in identifying those of John with the cherubim also. This opens up a fine view of the whole series of symbolic objects. Just as the heaven of John corresponds with the inner Tabernacle or Temple, so the living creatures of John correspond with the cherubic symbols of the Holy of Holies. But we cannot doubt that the same holds good with the seraphim of Isaiah; and thus cherubim and seraphim, whatever the difference of meaning, represent the same beings or things in the universal kingdom of God. Hence,

e. These living creatures carry us back, not only to the time of the erection of the tabernacle in the wilderness, but also even to the time of the fall of our race and the first announcement of the promise of redemption. When they thus appear for the first time, they seem rather ministers of judgment than of mercy; and so they have been usually regarded. We can by no means consider them as exclusively the former. We deem them as certainly the latter, even ministers of mercy. Our first parents had been deceived as to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; and had misused it accordingly. They might, in like manner, be deceived with respect to the tree of life, and be led to suppose that its fruit, even after their sin, might, if obtained and used, avail for the prolongation of life. In mercy, therefore, may we believe that the cherubim were appointed thus to guard the fallen ones from all such deception, and so to keep their minds fully and exclusively directed to the grace and mercy implied in the first and most precious promise of redemption. Be this as it may, these cherubim cannot be supposed to be representatives of the redeemed from among the recently fallen race of man. Evidently they represent a different order of beings, and therefore angelic, as all such are called in Scripture.

f. We would, then, conclude this discussion, by specially pointing once more to the fact, that this sublime vision of John carries our minds back to the very beginning of the great and glorious work of human redemption. In a high sense, accordingly, this vision is historical. Its symbolism sets forth with most marvellous clearness and brevity the grand facts and features of that wonderful history, even from the time of the announcement of the first promise to its fulfilment in the coming of the Promised One—in other words, from the Fall of the first Adam to the redemption of the Second.

(4) *Ver. 6. "Full of eyes before and behind"; and ver. 8, "The four living creatures, having each one of them six wings, are full of eyes round about and within."*

In having six wings, they resemble the seraphim of Isaiah, each one of which "had six wings: with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly"; seemingly as unworthy to look upon God or to appear before Him; as unworthy to be looked upon by God; and as yet ever ready and on the wing in the service of God. We may suppose a like use of the wings of the living creatures of the Apocalypse. Literal wings we cannot suppose; such wings are simply fine and fit symbols of all that motion which they are capable of using in doing the will and work of Jehovah. As full of eyes, these creatures resemble those of Ezekiel. The eye is a fine and fit symbol of knowledge, perceptive power, and the like. The possession of many eyes would naturally suggest the possession of vast and varied knowledge, immense intellectual power, such as those connected, as these are, with the wide and watchful providence of God, must possess. However, we must not forget that, in the next chapter, the Lamb is said to have "seven eyes which are the Seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth," so that, at least not improbably, these many eyes may also refer to the fulness of the Divine Spirit, by which they are animated, and enabled to do the otherwise impossible work assigned to them.

In the case of the living creatures of Ezekiel, almost every part was as if full of eyes or covered with them. Here, by "before and behind," the whole body might seem to be meant; whilst the other expression, "round about and within," would seem somewhat more obscure. Whether does this refer to their wings or their bodies? If to the latter, it would seem to be a mere repetition, and therefore we are disposed to assume the former; and then the parallel between this passage and the corresponding passages in Ezekiel will be the more clearly seen. Thus, in chap. x. 12, "And their whole body, and their backs, and their hands, and their wings, and the wheels, were full of eyes round about." Here, then, in ver. 6, we seem to have a first reference to the bodies of these living creatures, and in ver. 8 a second reference to their wings as well as their bodies. Each was, as it were, all eye.

(5) *"And the first creature (was) like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face as of a man, and the fourth creature (was) like a flying eagle."* We seem to have no reason to doubt, that all were of erect human form, with the excep-

tion of the face or head, and that, therefore, they are not to be identified with those wonderful remains of Assyrian art to which they have been compared. As they are purely symbolic, and by no means real objects, the use of such a variety of figure was quite legitimate, and should be regarded as meaning what they, through that variety, suggest; as, in the case of the Lamb, we find the various symbols explained. The lion-form thus naturally suggests the idea of courage; the calf or young ox, that of labour and endurance; the face of a man, that of all the higher attributes of mind, intelligence, reason, Divine moral nature; and the likeness of a flying eagle, that of lofty aspiration or of most active service. Taken together, these living and superhuman beings are to be regarded as endowed with all kinds of created powers and qualities, and that in the very highest degree, even beyond all that may be supposed actually possessed by any one class or kind of created beings. We say so, because, as representative of, it may be, countless numbers of actually existing beings, they may be viewed as symbolically possessing the sum of all the powers and qualities which are possessed by or distributed among those represented by them. When we contemplate them as really the same as those of Ezekiel, we are led to regard them as to no small extent symbolising the numerous and mighty agencies by which the vast and varied providence of God is carried on, and that in connection with the great and Divine work of redemption. As such agencies are, in this Book, everywhere represented by angels, these living creatures are thus to be deemed angelic; and, as we have again and again said, representative of the holy and unfallen universe.

(6) "*And the four living creatures, having each one six wings, are full of eyes round about and within.*" By anticipation, we have so treated of the wings and eyes of these creatures, that we need only add or repeat that these two symbols are finely fitted to express the two ideas of powerful and swiftest motion, and of greatest and most unerring intelligence and perceptive power.

(7) "*And they have no rest day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, (is) the Lord God, the Almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come.*" Here, and in Isaiah vi., we have virtually the same ascription of praise, or the same proclamation of the glorious holiness of Jehovah, the covenant-God of Israel, the God and Father of Jesus Christ, the God of salvation. Concerning the words of Isaiah, the Gospel assures us that "thus spake Isaiah when he saw the glory of Jesus," as the context shows, and in keeping with what Jesus Himself declared, "I and My Father are one." Here,

however, we are to think of Him who sitteth on the throne as emphatically the Father rather than the Son, as in next chapter, and throughout this Book, the Father and the Son, God and the Lamb, are so alluded to as to lead us to think rather of that in which they are viewed separately than of that in which they are contemplated as one. In fact, the mediatorial kingdom is set forth in such a way as to keep fully in view the mediatorial relationship of Father and Son, of God and the Lamb. Here, as in Isaiah, we learn what all holy and unfallen angelic beings think and how they speak of the ever-blessed God. We need not take the words literally or exclusively, as if implying that they simply used their mighty voice, or that they did nothing else than thus celebrate the praises of Jehovah. Doubtless, all holy beings silently and sublimely, by their spirit and works or actions, as well as by their words, cry without ceasing, "Holy, holy, holy, (is) Jehovah, God Almighty." God Himself so declares through Providence, and by the still small voice of human conscience, not to speak of the language of all nature and all natural law, and thus by these living creatures in so far as they mysteriously and mightily carry out the redemptive purpose of God in this world. The whole life of Christ continually says, even now, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty." The Cross is the most awful condemnation of sin, and therefore the most powerful proclamation of the holiness of God. All Christians should so live as to proclaim the same holiness everywhere and in every ear, as if with the very voice of the seraphim; and this they may well do, as their delightful and daily work is to show forth the boundless grace and mercy of the same Most High God.

(8) "*And when the living creatures shall give glory and honour and thanks to Him that sitteth on the throne, to Him that liveth for ever and ever, the four and twenty elders shall fall down before Him that sitteth on the throne, and shall worship Him that liveth for ever and ever, and shall cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honour and the power: for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they were, and were created.*"

a. We have here the song of creation, just as in next chapter we have the song of redemption. Sublimely the living creatures are said to "give glory and honour and thanks to Him that sitteth on the throne, to Him that liveth for ever and ever." From the words of the song which follows, we infer that, in so doing, they chiefly, if not here entirely, contemplate Jehovah as the great

Creator and Governor of the universe. They contemplate Him, both as all-glorious in Himself, and as of boundless goodness to them; and so, they breathe the spirit of adoration and reverence, of gratitude and praise. Most beautifully is Jehovah doubly described: *first*, as on the throne of the universe, or as ruling over all His creatures; and, *secondly*, as living for ever and ever, or as having all life in Himself, and, doubtless also, as the fountain of all life throughout the universe. They may serve God in a countless variety of ways; but, in so doing, they do all to the glory of God, all in honour of God, and all as expressing their thankfulness to God. In this way, He sits on the throne of the universe, inhabiting eternally the praises of the universe.

b. The elders enter fully into the spirit of these holy and unfallen beings. Their sin had forfeited the blessedness and blessings of creation. That blessedness and these blessings are restored by redemption. They are thus prepared to join in the worship of the holy and unfallen universe. They can rejoice, through Jesus, in the Universal King as their God and Father. They can fall down and worship. They "cast their crowns before the throne," those crowns which the redeemed wear as kings and priests to God; thus acknowledging that these crowns, with all the wealth and glory and blessedness which they imply, are to be traced to the grace and mercy and love of the Great King.

c. In thus joining in the worship of these holy and unfallen ones, they sing, as we have said, the song of creation, the song in which alone the unfallen can fully unite. Afterwards, the elders will sing the song of redemption; whilst these glorious beings, who cannot possibly fully enter into it, will perfectly sympathise, and thus far unite in the praises of God and the Lamb. In this song of creation, all things are traced to the Almighty Creative hand. His will is declared to be the absolute and only cause—nay, both origin and end. He sits upon the throne of the universe in virtue of that perfect and unchallengeable right of universal creation. This song also expresses the perfect submission of all the wills of these representatives of the redeemed to the all-perfect will of God; thus proving that they have not only been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, but also been restored to renewed union and fellowship with God, to such union and such fellowship as the holy and unfallen have ever enjoyed or never lost. They acknowledge the right of the great Creator to the glorious name, Jehovah, which may be interpreted by the name which by way of explanation He used of Himself, "I AM THAT I AM," which, again, might be shown to include

'I have been that I have been, and I will be or do what I will be or do.' In their sin and fall, they had preferred their own will to the will of God, and thus had practically said that they would be and do what they would be and do. Through their salvation they had been led to give up their own sinful and selfish will, and to accept the will of Jehovah, as their good and perfect and acceptable and eternal law, first on earth and afterwards in heaven. In this way they are restored to their ever-blessed Creator on the one hand, and to all the holy and unfallen creatures of God on the other. Fallen and unfallen have now the same Father and God. All love Him and love one another. In obeying the one perfect and universal and harmonious will, they live for ever in glorious harmony. Through all involved in this wondrous, this glorious harmony, shall arise those ceaseless praises, the just and becoming inheritance of *'Him who inhabiteth eternity.'*"

6. Here we may prepare for the more correct interpretation of next chapter, by repeating what we do well to keep in view—namely, that, in this chapter, we have sublimely represented the whole history of redemption, from the fall of the first Adam to the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. All is symbol or combination of symbols. We have the living creatures or cherubim of the garden of Eden, of the Tabernacle and Temple, the seraphim of Isaiah, and the living creatures of Ezekiel. We have the rainbow of the Deluge and of the covenant of mercy. We have the elders, or, as we have been led to regard them, the united inspired teachers, and, through the truth taught, the ruling powers of Israel, both typical and spiritual, or, as we have suggested, the prophets of Israel and the Apostles of Christ, who certainly have taught and ruled the whole Israel of God up to the present day, and will continue to do so to the end of time. Lastly, and above all, we have Jehovah seated on that throne, which, in relation to ancient Israel, was called the mercy-seat, and in relation to Christian Israel is called the throne of grace, but which at the same time is the throne of glory, the throne of the entire universe. So enthroned, He carries on the great redemptive work from age to age, and must continue to do so till all has reached its full consummation. The point of time here specially intended is that of the transition from the Mosaic to the Christian dispensation, or immediately after the ascension and before the glorification and coronation of Jesus Christ.

II.

CHAPTER V.

THE CORONATION OF THE CRUCIFIED REDEEMER.

1. *Ver.* 1. "And I saw in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the back, close sealed with seven seals."

(1) By forming this into a separate chapter from the preceding, much has been done to conceal their real connection and true meaning. The opening words, "And I saw in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne," indicate no change of scene or of vision, but simply a continuation and further disclosure of one and the same consecutive revelation. The same might be said of the sixth chapter. All three form one complete whole, to which the seventh is supplementary. We have pointed to the symbolism of the fourth chapter as presenting a view of the kingdom of grace considered historically or as in progress from the very beginning down to the time of Christ. We expressed a somewhat decided conviction that the time here intended is that of the transition from the Mosaic to the Christian Dispensation. The appearance of the Lamb proves it to have been after the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, and therefore after His entire life on earth, after His whole earthly ministry, with its appointment of the Apostles and with the actual foundation, if not formation, of the Christian Church. After the ascension, then, or at the transition point above referred to Christ appears in the inner or upper sanctuary in wonderful, yet most appropriate form. Just before His appearance, John saw what he had not seen before, or had not been led to observe, a book in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

(2) This book, of course, we are to regard as a symbol; or, it is to be viewed mystically, not literally. Is it possible for us to discover with any degree of certainty what it really symbolises? It has led to very much thought, and suggested a very considerable variety of explanation. As hinted above, we do well to note the date here referred to. Jehovah is represented as reigning through all past ages, and as carrying on His one great and progressive redemptive work, up to the close of one dispensation and the beginning of another, and therefore as, in having this book in His right hand, doing something of vast importance, and in perfect keeping with the nature of this great crisis. In thinking of this matter, we might at least suppose some parallel between the establishment of the old covenant Church, or formation of the

literal Israel into a kingdom, and the establishment of the new covenant Church, or formation of the spiritual Israel into a kingdom. Such a parallel we found, if not fully drawn, at least clearly alluded to, in the first chapter of this Book ; so that it would not be strange if we found some trace of it here. In the one case, there was the Book of the Covenant, the book according to which Jehovah was to rule and Israel to be ruled, and that with its promises and predictions as well as its precepts and laws. Enthroned on Mount Sinai, and that after the great typical redemption, and when about to organise the kingdom, Jehovah might be viewed as having a book in His right hand, a book to be taken or accepted by Moses, the mediator of the old covenant, and a book thus relating to the destiny as well as the government of the literal Israel. We say destiny or destinies of Israel, because their whole future history, their obedience and disobedience, their prosperity and adversity, their tenure and their loss of the land of promise, were all made known to Moses, and through Moses to the people. Thus actually made known or revealed, all may be said to have been presented to this great mediatorial type of Christ, not as a sealed, but as an open book.

All this might suggest, that the mystic book in the right hand of the same great King, also some time after the great and real Redemption, and when the true Israel were about to be organised into a kingdom, must refer to the government and destinies of the redeemed and new covenant people of God. In this case, we may see the propriety of the book being fast-sealed and shut from the vision of every created eye. He, whom Moses had prophetically described as "a Prophet like to him," as, like him, introducing a new dispensation, and greater than he, not only as Divine in Person, but also as introducing a higher and more glorious economy, by which his would be substituted, and which would never pass away, was now about to ascend, as the Son of God and Redeemer of men, the very throne of Jehovah itself, and thence to rule His people, to rule the whole world in their behalf, to guide their entire future destinies, and, whilst doing so, to reign over the whole universe, and therefore to Him it would seem most fitly and most gloriously to belong, to open the yet close-sealed book of the new and everlasting kingdom, to make known the unknown and unknowable mind and will of Him who sits upon the throne, and whose mind and will that book, written all over, *mystically* contains ; and then to appear and to prove Himself the very Prophet as well as King pre-announced by Moses and the prophets, and beyond thought greater than them all.

(3) Such is our general idea of this book. By considering one or two of the principal views of it, that idea may assume a more definite form. Of these Alford has given a clear and concise statement, from which we may borrow the following:—

a. We may begin with that of Alford himself, as it clearly seems to imply that the book is still unopened, or “*unfolded*,” and that what is *in* that book shall not be known until, in full completion, γνωρισθῇ ταῖς ἀρχαῖς καὶ ταῖς ἐξουσίαις ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις διὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἡ πολυποίκιλος σοφία τοῦ Θεοῦ (Eph. iii. 10): “To the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly (places) might be made known through the Church the manifold wisdom of God.” Here, in quoting the Greek words, the excellent Dean has left out the νῦν, *now*, “might *now* be made known,”—has left out the very word which would tend rather to upset than to uphold his peculiar view of this book. The real contents he would suppose “hid from the coming ages, and therefore not now to be known.” Christ, in fact, in opening the seals, does not open the book at all. “These visions”—those which followed the opening of the seals—“are merely symbolic representations of the progress of God’s manifestation of the purpose of His will; but no portion of the roll is actually unfolded, nor is anything read out of the book.” But, what is meant by opening the seals by which a book is “fast-sealed” or “close-sealed,” but simply the opening of the book itself? And if a book or letter is not to be opened and read, why open or break the seals at all? True, nothing is literally read; yet we take all to be symbolically read,—read as vision follows vision, as seal is opened after seal.

Then, as seems to have been altogether overlooked, when the seventh and last seal is opened, the entire book is opened, the whole roll is, if not “unrolled,” at least so unsealed, and therefore so opened, or such that it may, without obstruction, be unrolled or opened as the remaining visions may be successively presented to the mind of the seer. As the book was in the form of a roll, nothing seems more natural than that the seals should be connected with so many portions of the whole, and that the opening of the last seal, being the final opening of the book, should be followed, as we find, with a vastly greater number of visions than any of the others. The very demand as to the power to open, followed by the facts that the Lamb is expressly said to have “overcome to open the book and the seven seals thereof,” and that the “new song” exalts Him as “worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof,” seem fully to prove that the book contains a revelation

which the Lamb was about to make, and which He is represented as making, of the secret mind and will of God, symbolised by the fast-sealed book.

Still, as the book is a grand symbol, the reading of it is naturally, and, as we find, not literal, but symbolical, or by the exhibition of a great variety of symbols. The whole may be viewed as a grand symbolical prophecy, and therefore doubly hard to interpret, both because symbols are so far obscure, and because all prophecy is attended more or less with obscurity. Yet, as time rolls on, such obscurity passes away, and the whole goes on to prove itself a grand and glorious and sure revelation from heaven.

b. "Some," says Alford, "of our earliest commentators understood by this book the Old Testament, or the Old and New combined." Not a little might be said in favour of this. We must not forget that the New Testament was not written, that the Apostles were not prepared to preach, that Pentecost had not yet come, when the glorification of Christ here represented took place, for "the Spirit was not given" before "Christ was glorified." When He was glorified, the promised Spirit was most richly imparted, and the wonderful scenes of Pentecost immediately followed. We have thus another index of the real date referred to in this vision. As we have already seen, it followed the day of Ascension; so we now find it preceded the promised gift of the Spirit, and therefore the day of Pentecost. The New Testament was thus, at this date, a book close-sealed, and a book which Christ alone could open by the gift of the Holy Spirit. There was some room, then, for this view of the old interpretation, that "the opening of the seals meant the fulfilment, and consequent bringing to light, of Old Testament prophecy by the events of Redemption as accomplished in the Person of our Lord." Much might at least be said of a modified form of this view—namely, that the Old Testament prophecies contain, in a way that the prophets themselves could not understand, the sum and substance of all redemptive prophecy, and were thus a sealed book, which Christ alone could open, and which He may be said to have opened through these very visions, especially as interpreted by the light of the New Testament, which, as we have said, was not given when these seals are represented as being opened. We have no doubt that this early interpretation contains, not the whole truth, but a very important part of it.

c. Alford goes on to allude to those kindred views, according to which the mystic book is identified either with certain portions of the Apocalypse, or with the Apocalypse itself. Without dealing with

these, we may simply say, that not a little might be said in favour of all that part of the Apocalypse which follows the appearance of the Lamb and His taking the book. This so far follows as an inference from the idea that the Lamb actually opened the book and the seals thereof, or that the book itself actually contained a revelation which Christ was to open up and to convey. Only in so far as He did open it up, could it be properly regarded as a revelation at all. We may merely add that this view has more in common with that of the old commentators than would at first appear, in that the two views are by no means greatly inconsistent with one another. Thus, to give an example, the vision of the wild beast is simply a clearer and more intelligible representation of the corresponding vision in the Book of Daniel.

d. Alford gives one more view, which in the main is his own—namely, that the book represents —“*Divinæ providentiæ concilium et præfinitio, qua apud Se statuit et decrevit facere vel permittere,*” etc. “This,” he adds, “is very nearly that of Vitringa, Mede (‘*Codex fatidicus seu conciliorum Dei*’), Ewald, De Wette, etc. We may observe that it is in fact but a limitation of this meaning, when many understand the book to contain the prophetic fortunes of the Church of Christ; but also that it is a limitation which has arisen from the mistake, noticed above, of confounding the opening of the seals with the reading of the contents of the book. Those successive openings, or, if we will, the fortunes and periods of the Church and world, are but so many preparations for that final state of perfection in which the Lamb shall reveal to the Church the contents of the book itself.” Whilst by no means accepting Alford’s peculiar view, thus expressed, we have long held virtually the general idea here indicated, or that the book relates to the secret councils and purposes of God with respect to the government and destinies of both Church and world. Nor can this view be said to differ much from the other views to which we have specially referred. It cannot be said to differ from that which identifies the book with the greater part of the Apocalypse, as it simply states what the contents of the Apocalypse really refer to. Nor can it differ widely from the view that the book sets forth the fulfilment of Old Testament and New Testament prophecy, provided only that prophecy be regarded as really complete in itself or comprehensive of all redemptive prophecy, and therefore of that contained in the Apocalypse.

e. To come back, then, to the view suggested in the outset, that this book stands, in relation to Christ and the whole true Israel

of God, as the open book or actual revelation of Sinai stood to Moses and ancient Israel, we may now say that it seems to be in general harmony with the chief views now given, whilst it enables us more clearly to see the character and propriety of the whole vision granted to John. It sets before our minds the idea of the immediately coming glorification and reign of Christ, and of the character of that reign; the contests and destinies of His kingdom, the foes whom Christ and His people have to fight and overcome, and the final and glorious issue of the grand progressive redemptive work. In this way, too, we are led to contemplate the book as more than a mere book of prophecy, a mere unveiling of the future of the Church and world, or even as that of the mind and will of God, according to which the glorified Messiah is to conduct the whole affairs of His spiritual and everlasting kingdom. The visions which follow the opening of the seals we take to be so many more or less obscure, more or less clear, prophetic indications of the results of the reign, inclusive of the warfare of the Mediatorial King. But the real opening of the book and the seals thereof we take to be the actual, the most mighty and glorious work of Christ, in carrying on His reign of grace and mercy, of justice and judgment, in order to the conquest of the world and the preparation of His countless redeemed people to form His perfectly sinless and eternally blessed kingdom.

2. *Vers. 2, 3.* "And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a great voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no one in heaven, or on earth, or under the earth, was able to open the book, or to look thereon."

(1) "*And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a great voice.*"

We may here repeat that this best consists with the idea of the continuity of the vision, and also with the idea that the book was there before, and simply unobserved by John. The proclamation was a call of attention to the book, not only to men on earth, but also to angels in heaven—nay, to the whole moral universe. The angels being said to desire to know the very things we have been supposing to form the contents of this book, we can easily see how the call should be addressed to them; and addressed, we may suppose, by means of some special awakening of this very desire, along with the further expectation or thought of a coming disclosure of the redemptive grace of Jehovah, which as yet they had been unable to comprehend. Along with the intense desire to know, there would be felt a deep consciousness of inability to discover.

In the case of mankind, especially among the Jewish people, there had been awakened a deep sense of dissatisfaction with the state of things, and a vivid anticipation of the coming reign of the Messiah on the one hand, and of a return of the golden age to the world on the other. Yet all, Jews and Gentiles, were unable to forecast the future, or to form any definite idea of what the coming era would be. The thought of the future, and of the impossibility of removing the thick veil by which it was hid from all created view, seems to have taken possession of all minds. All creation seemed to be called upon to ponder the future, especially of this world, and to be demanded, as by a mighty angel, to discover, if able, what it seemed so greatly desirable to know.

(2) "*Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?*" It is well to mark the express terms of the proclamation, especially the use of the word *worthy*. As Alford has shown, *ikavos*, *fit*, is used in Matthew for *ἀξιος*, *worthy*, as if they were synonymous. However, whilst fitness, whilst power, is implied, moral fitness, worthiness due to character or achievement, or to both combined, is evidently required. As the result proved, no created being possessed the excellence demanded. Hence,

(3) "*And no one in the heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth, was able to open the book, or to look thereon.*" All is silence. No one ventures to reply. The awful secret must remain unknown. Apparently the book cannot be opened. So John seems to think. Nor need we wonder. The veil which conceals the future no created hand can lift. In this case there was to such a double impossibility—the impossibility of simply foreknowing and foretelling the future of this world, and the impossibility of so ruling and so influencing mankind as actually to bring that future to pass. If we consider the former alone, we have merely to ask who, at the date implied—that between the death of Christ and the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost—could possibly have foreseen the state of the world, say, at the close of the first century? Jesus, who had professed to be the promised King destined to save mankind, had just been crucified, and thus, in the eyes of the nation, proved to have utterly failed to make good His profession. His disciples had withdrawn, as if forsaken of every hope, and defeated in the great contest in which, and under their fallen Leader, they had been engaged. The Jewish nation was under the iron yoke of Rome; and seemed destined to play no important part in time to come. The vast regions of Eastern Asia, now peopled with multitudes of human beings, far more numerous than

those of the whole Roman Empire, were to all intents unknown. For ages after, the New World of America was entirely beyond the range of European knowledge. The Roman Empire itself seemed to embrace almost the entire world. The vast Imperial Power appeared to have fully and for ever subdued the human race, and to have formed all nations into a kingdom which would last as long as the world itself. The proud capital was called the Eternal City. At this time, then, who could have foreseen the changes of even half a century? For many years the rising Church could be but little appreciated. But who could have foreseen the state of the world in the present day? Who could have anticipated the glory, the power, the dominion of the Crucified One in our times, in this country, and in other lands? Now is He the acknowledged Prince of the kings of the earth. The most powerful nations of the earth are those which render Him the highest praise. We repeat, what creature, angel or man, could have possibly foreseen the indescribable contrast between the world that then was and the world that now is? If the history of the past may be read in this Book of Apocalypse, then assuredly it could have been written by no hand unguided by the omniscient eye of the eternal God. "And no one . . . was able to open the book."

3. *Vers. 4, 5.* "And I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look thereon: and one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath overcome, to open the book and the seven seals thereof."

John must not here be viewed as an inspired Apostle, but as one under the spirit of prophecy, raised by that spirit to a state of Divine ecstatic vision, and as influenced by what he saw, as interested in it, and as satisfied or disappointed accordingly. In this case he was at first disappointed and sorrowful even to tears. He wept much. He may have expected to learn far more than he yet knew of the Saviour whom he loved, and of the persecuted Church in whose sufferings he shared. He is not left to weep. One of the elders tells him of One well known in ancient prophecy who could and would open the book. He calls that One by a name suggestive of strength, courage, greatness, majesty—"The Lion of the tribe of Judah," the One whom Jehovah had made strong for Himself, "the Root of David," naturally meaning the root from which David sprang, but more truly according to Scripture, the Branch from the root of David, the king of Israel, the appointed root of the Messianic Tree. This Lion, says the elder, "has overcome, to

open": has so overcome or so conquered as to prove Himself worthy as well as able to open the book. Our Authorised Version, "prevailed to open," suggests the idea that, by the exercise of mighty power, He has already succeeded in opening it. The Revised is here more correct, and, decidedly better. His past has demonstrated his fitness, His worthiness, His very right as well as might, to open the book, or to do all that such opening symbolises. In fact, the very taking of the book seems clearly to imply the undertaking to rule over the world; as He appears to indicate by what He said to the Church of Laodicea, "He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with My Father on His throne."

4. *Ver. 6.* "And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth."

(1) It may be well to inquire concerning the real place in which the Lamb appeared. The words have suggested to most readers, that He stood in the midst or within the circle of the throne, and so was at the centre of the smaller circle of the living creatures as well as of the larger circle of the elders. This could not be the case, else He could not be said to come in order to take the book, as He would be beside it already. But, in point of fact, the words do not imply what has been thus supposed. The living creatures are connected with the throne, and we may render all more clear if we make a very slight addition, "In the midst of the throne and of the living creatures," on the one hand, and "in the midst of the elders" on the other. But, why in this case have a second and redundant "in the midst of"? This repetition may be regarded as a pure Hebraism, of which we have a simple illustration in Gen. i. 4,—in the English, "And God divided the light from the darkness,"—in the Hebrew, "And God divided between the light and between the darkness." The Lamb, then, was standing in the middle space, or the space between the throne and the living creatures on the one hand, and the elders on the other, between, in fact, Jehovah and the representatives of the holy and unfallen universe on the one part, and the elders or representatives of the fallen and redeemed world on the other. We are careful to deal with this point, because we deem it of far greater importance than it may at first appear. In standing thus, He takes His proper place as Mediator between God and man; and not only so, but between the unfallen and the fallen,

reconciling the sinless and unfallen to the restoration of the fallen and guilty, and showing it to be consistent with perfect law, impartial justice, and right universal government, to save mankind.

(2) John was told of a Lion, and behold, a Lamb! All symbolised by both met in Christ. He has all the strength and majesty of the one, and all the gentleness and innocence of the other. Here, however, He appears as the infinitely precious Sacrificial Lamb, with all the marks of recent slaughter, but not as if still dead. No, He has seven horns, symbolic of infinite power, and seven eyes, symbolic of infinite knowledge; and yet at the same time symbolising, as we are told, the seven Spirits of God, or the One all-powerful and all-knowing Holy Spirit. These Spirits, thus signifying the One Divine Spirit, were, in the opening of the Apocalypse, connected with the Father and the Son; in the epistle to the Church in Sardis, Jesus describes Himself as "He that hath the seven Spirits of God"; whilst in chap. iv. we read of "seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God," or the One Holy Spirit of both Father and Son. These Spirits are here said to be "sent forth into all the earth," sent forth to do the great and gracious work of Father and Son in the salvation of the world.

5. *Vers. 7, 8.* "And He came and took (it) out of the right hand of Him that sat on the throne. And when He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints."

(1) How calm and sublime! He goes and takes the awful volume out of the hand of the great Jehovah. How vast the undertaking! What other undertaking can be compared with this? Perhaps we may say, only another, and that His own precious and most mysterious undertaking to become the Redeemer of the world. The full meaning of this act of simply taking the book we cannot comprehend. Doubtless, it meant infinitely more than the simple words naturally suggest. As the following words seem to indicate, it would appear to imply that He accepted the reins, not only of mediatorial government, but even of universal government, at the hand of Him who sat upon the throne. Whatever else, that book would seem to imply the plans and purposes of the Most High, which it was the part of His eternal reign to realise, and which He commits to this Slain Lamb that, as by this act He engages, they may be fully and faithfully realised by Him. That nothing less than this is meant will, we think, appear from what follows.

(2) "*And when He had taken (it),*" and, we may interpose, before He had opened a single seal, or revealed what the book contained, or proved by fact that He was able to fulfil His mighty and mysterious undertaking, "the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb," in an act of the most profound and solemn worship, involving the full recognition of His Divinity, and followed by a most seraphic song of adoration on the one hand, and of acknowledgment of His fitness and worthiness to reign universally on the other. Let it be observed that there are not only harps for loftiest praises, but incense, significant of "the prayers of the saints," presented to the Redeemer by the representatives of the redeemed. As these heavenly beings, unfallen and redeemed, could be capable of no idolatrous act, we must infer that they thus intended to acknowledge the throne of Jehovah as now the throne of the Lamb.

6. *Vers. 9, 10.* "And they sing a new song, saying, Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with Thy blood (men) of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and madest them (to be) unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon the earth."

(1) Such is the inauguration or coronation song. It is in keeping with the natal song, which the angelic choir came down from heaven to sing on earth. It is called a new song. It celebrated a new event, the entrance of the conquering Lamb into heaven, the Lamb, who was not conquered either by sin or death, but who, through death, conquered both sin and death. The occasion was thus new; the grand crisis in the history of both earth and heaven was new; the dispensation introduced was new; the effect of the presence of Christ was new; to these "harpers with their harps," all heaven and all earth had become new; Christ Himself, as we have virtually said, had to them become new; the reign just begun, of one possessing a created nature, was new; the prospects of the created universe had become new; their own relations to God and to Christ and to one another had become new: nay, and with reverence it may be added, in their eyes, or to their minds and hearts, God Himself had become new. Well might the song be called new! The same song had never been before sung. It was most wonderful and glorious as well as new.

(2) "*Worthy art Thou to take the book, . . . for Thou wast slain.*" Here we find the central and the main reason of this

infinite exaltation and universal glorification of Jesus Christ. He was slain. To the Cross all look, as for the special right to the Crown. Even in the case of the Lamb, "no cross, no crown." Without the great Sacrifice, no great salvation, no redeemed people to be formed into the kingdom of Redeemer and redeemed. Unless for this end, the very Person of Christ, as that of the Word made flesh, had never been. The great Jehovah would have continued to reign, in every sense alone, over His vast creation, made up of unfallen and fallen, holy and unholy, and with none redeemed, restored and blessed. To the question, "Art Thou a King?" Jesus replied, "To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into this world." As coming from heaven to earth, notwithstanding His apparent mean condition and lowly birth, He was not only pre-existent, but, in the truest and highest sense, Divine. In all the angelic adoration and praise of the Eternal God and Father, He had been implicitly adored and praised. Still, even the essential goodness and glory of eternal and unchangeable Godhead could not of itself have drawn forth—we were about to say, could not have merited—this new, this peculiar, this loftiest song of praise, "Thou wast slain." The words mean infinitely more than they or any words can literally express. They point to the end of the mighty career of measureless condescension, and unreservedly self-sacrificing love. That love we have been perhaps unconsciously and too exclusively identifying with compassion for the perishing or love directed towards mankind; whilst in reality it embraced all love to the infinite Father, whose glory He came to promote and whose will He came to do; and whilst, still further, it embraced love to the whole moral universe, whose higher well-being He meant to advance and secure, by giving, through His Incarnation, His self-denying life and His self-sacrificing death, a vision of the God of love, of His character and government, of the glory of His harmoniously combined holiness and mercy—nay, of His inconceivable interest, as universal Creator, in the welfare of all, even the meanest and least worthy, of His creatures.

Well, therefore, may angels unite with the redeemed in this great song! Well did they come down from heaven, to sing the natal song, "Glory to God in the highest," for there was then no glory in heaven to be compared with the glory of the stable and manger on earth. And now, to the minds and hearts of these angelic beings, even the glory of the birth seems forgotten and lost in the more excellent glory of the death of Jesus Christ. How

strange and wonderful the Cross of Calvary! It is the strangest and most wonderful object within the circle of creation. It is unique in the history of the universe as a revelation of the Eternal God; it has not been equalled by any other in the past, in heaven or on earth, and can never be surpassed anywhere in the endless future. Strange, strange indeed, that a crucifixion, the very lowest and most degrading form of execution, could, by any possibility, be both intended and fitted, by the infinite wisdom of God, to reveal the very highest glory of God! Yet, as a simple and most certain matter of fact, and not as a mere matter of doctrine or of faith, however true, such is the case. As the strong angel challenged the created universe to find one capable of opening this mysterious book, the weakest Christian might well defy all men and angels to point to anything said or done by any creature, or even by the great Creator Himself, for one moment to be compared with this most shameful, this most inglorious Cross of Calvary, as an unveiling of the heart, as a manifestation of the glory, of the invisible, the infinite and the eternal God.

The idea of a Cross thus brighter than all creation, a Cross needed to reveal a deeper mercy and a richer love in the bosom of God than it was possible for His whole creation to do, a Cross which should be and has become the very centre of that creation, viewed as a mirror of infinite goodness as well as infinite greatness, a Cross which thus forms the true and perfect complement of creation, without which that creation must have ever been incomplete as a Divine Revelation,—this idea, we most confidently affirm, could never have entered the mind of man or of any created being, or have been anything else or less than the most glorious idea, or than the thought of the most glorious purpose, of the mind and heart of God. Well, then, might these representatives of the fallen and unfallen universe sing this new and everlasting song! Well may they declare Jesus worthy to do what involves His rising to the highest possible place and power and glory, even to His Father's throne, or to rule for ever and ever over the unfallen and redeemed alike, even over the entire universe of God! In the Cross of the Lord of glory, they see the Crown most richly won: in the Crown of that Lord of Glory, they see the Cross most fitly rewarded and magnified.

(3) "*And didst purchase unto God with Thy blood of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.*" Not only was the Cross the most wonderful manifestation of Divine love or of Divine character; it was, as here declared, of the nature of a vast and

mighty purchase, of a great redemptive self-sacrifice,—a purchase, a redemption of countless human beings, not from God, as if they were mercilessly held by Him in captivity or bondage, till the last farthing of unjust ransom had been laid at His feet, but “unto God,”—yes, “unto God,” as if they were indeed children, lost to God through their own sin, and longed for by Him, whilst as “lawful captives” they could be restored to Him only by means of a ransom no less costly and precious than that here celebrated, “with the Blood of the Lamb.” The words here used can refer to no mere influence of the Cross, however regenerating in its nature, and however vast in its power. A real sin-offering, a true propitiation for sin, cannot but be intended. The desert of human guilt is clearly involved, and not the mere power of human sinfulness.

The theory which would set aside the legal aspect of the Atonement, and hold by its moral aspect alone, and which has been commending itself to many minds for not a few recent years, cannot, we are persuaded, stand the test of time, the test of a full and faithful Scripture exegesis, or the test of the true and enlightened study of the nature and end of all law and government, whether human or Divine. Law is simply worthless, in fact, is no law properly so called at all, unless practically expressive of the moral value of actions, good or evil. Rewards and punishments are designed to give just expression to that value. To set aside such rewards and punishments would be to set aside all moral law and all moral government, to uncrown and dethrone the Divine and Universal King, and practically to deny that there is such a thing as a moral nature in any creature, or that there can be such a thing as sin in the wide universe. No one would deny to God the glorious prerogative to pardon the very guiltiest of all His creatures; but who will venture to say that He actually will or can pardon the very least of all sins, without before or afterwards treating it with just condemnation? This Paul finely sets forth in the opening of Rom. viii., where he speaks of “God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and (as an offering) for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” Whatever the manifold purpose of the Atonement, here we certainly find one purpose clearly expressed by Paul, and which cannot be fairly doubted or easily misconceived. Men may seem to exalt the character and the prerogative of God, by maintaining that He must have absolutely unlimited authority and power to pardon. However, there may be a powerlessness even in God so to pardon, more exalting and glorifying to Him than any such power can possibly be. We think they have the broadest and most

enlightened as well as profoundest and most reverent views of God and His great redemptive work, who hold that the Great King cannot but demand, whilst the Blessed Father could not but provide, the glorious propitiatory Sacrifice of the Cross, in virtue of which all heaven and earth are here represented as giving glory to "Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb."

(4) "*And madest them unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon the earth.*" This very ascription of praise we have been led to contemplate already, as given in like terms by the redeemed from among men (chap. i. 5, 6), "Unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by His blood; and He made us to be a kingdom, (to be) priests to His God and Father: to Him (be) the glory and the dominion for ever and ever." According to the Authorised Version, the two expressions of praise more closely resemble one another. We have above given that of the Revised, and may here also give that of the Authorised: "Thou art worthy, . . . for Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every tribe . . . and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth." We need not say that the difference is neither small nor inexpressive. However decided our Revisers with respect to the original text, not a little might be said in favour of the Authorised. Certainly we might expect to find "us," or some other word, where the Revisers supply "men,"—"purchased (men) of every tribe." If "us" had been there, then we must have had "us" where the Revisers have "them,"—"madest them (to be) a kingdom." Once more, "kings and priests," said to "reign on the earth," would seem more natural than "a kingdom and priests" so said to reign. What, then, does the internal evidence seem to favour? We must fairly acknowledge that, supposing the Revised Text to be correct, we can easily account for the implied alteration because of the near resemblance of the one ascription to the other. Especially might the absence of an object to the verb, purchase, supplied by the Revisers "men," suggest the "us" of the Authorised. Then, after inserting "us," the subsequent "them" must as a matter of course have given place to the only consistent "us." In this way we can see that the Revised text was more likely to be changed into the Authorised than the Authorised into the Revised. This is certainly greatly in favour of the latter. But what of the context? In the case of the first ascription, that in the first chapter, the "us" seems alone suitable; and certainly, at first sight, it would here seem at least not unsuitable.

When, however, we more closely examine, we may find something very greatly favouring the "men" and the "them" of the New Version. The date of the coronation set forth in this vision—namely, that of the ascension, or that of the transition from the Mosaic to the Christian economy—appears very strongly to favour the Revised Version. At that date the work of conversion and of forming into a kingdom had hardly more than begun, and certainly had not begun among the Gentile nations. It had been sufficiently begun and advanced, to warrant us to put the twelve Apostles among the four and twenty elders of this vision, whom we have regarded as representative of the redeemed, not unlikely of both economies. Still, beyond them, we have no multitude of true Israelites introduced into this vision, as we find introduced into the heaven of the vision of the seventh chapter. If, then, this song was sung just after the ascension, or when Christ entered the heavenly world, the form which it would naturally and suitably assume would be that of the Revised text, "Thou didst purchase (men) out of every tribe, and madest them a kingdom." But, it may be said, this latter clause seems clearly to imply a later date, and therefore that the date to which we have pointed cannot be the correct one. This may seem a strong, if not an invincible objection. We think not. The great thing celebrated as that which proved His fitness to reign was the fact that He had been slain, or had made the great Self-sacrifice. That was past, and could not but be past, in order to form the basis of this triumphant song; but the full and final result, the gathering from all nations and the forming of the gathered into a kingdom of priests, might still be in the future, and here alluded to in the way of prophetic anticipation. Nor is this any far-fetched method of getting over the great apparent difficulty. It consists with even our every-day language. Thus, we say such a man has died and left a will, and made so many generations of a certain family proprietors of his estate. So here, Thou hast redeemed countless men of all lands and made them into a kingdom; the redemption being actually past, like the death of the supposed testator, and the forming into an actual kingdom being a progressive work in the future, as the actual inheritance of the supposed estate could only be realised through so many successive periods yet to come.

In this way we seem clearly to find that, all things considered, the Revised Version is the more suitable, and, having the higher manuscript authority, ought to be accepted as the best. One more objection, however, must be noticed. According to that Version, it is said of the redeemed, "and they reign on the earth," words which

certainly seem to imply that their reign has already begun. However, it was not a fact that the persons referred to, far less all of them, were then reigning on earth—and that whatever date we suppose, whether that which we have upheld, or that of the time of the giving of the Apocalypse itself. On any supposition, we must take the words as anticipative. Of course, certain of those here alluded to had already been formed by Christ into a kingdom, or nucleus of a kingdom, before He left this world. He, who calleth things that are not as though they were, and inspires prophets to speak of the future as if it were the present, or even the past, may have led those heavenly worshippers to take such a view of the progressive kingdom as to lead them to speak of those certainly destined to reign, as if already actually reigning on the earth. Thus did God, by way of encouragement to Paul, speak of what did not exist, but was destined to result from the Apostolic labours—"I have much people in this city." One would think that the future would have been more in harmony with the Revised Version than the present,—“and they shall reign,” and not “and they reign on the earth.” Still, this is not the case. The present alone will suit. If it had been, “and they shall reign,” we should have been led to think of their reign as beginning after all had been gathered, and thus only in the remotest future, instead of being led to regard the reign of all as running through all the ages of their continuous conversion or of their royal priestly lives in this world. The whole, then, as we have said, is to be regarded as purely anticipative.

7. *Vers. 11, 12.* “And I saw, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a great voice, Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”

This vast multitude may have been all the while present; yet, like the book in the hand of the Great King, for a time unobserved by the eye of John. He would be led to contemplate object after object as they stood in designed relationship to each other. The idea set forth seems to be that of a grand angelic assembly gathered for the purpose of witnessing and taking part in the coronation services of the Lamb. Here we have, indeed, an “innumerable company of angels.” Jehovah is thus represented as the Centre of the universe, the Author of the entire moral world, angels and men; all but men being called angels. All hail Jesus as universal

King. His self-sacrificing redemptive work, as already referred to, perfectly demonstrates His fitness as well as right to reign over all, to be the very organ of Jehovah, and so in some sense to be henceforth the Mediator between God and all holy creatures, as He is in the more complete sense the Mediator between God and man. They, too, would unite in the grand song, "Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain!" They cannot overlook the great self-sacrifice. Their pure, unselfish and unenvying hearts are full of love, of admiration, of praise.

These angels are no strangers to the slain Lamb. They do not see in Him one who stands in no close relation to themselves. They see One not only closely associated with the Creator and Father of all, but who could say, as they well know, "I and My Father are one." They see Him by whom God created the world, and by whom they were created themselves. Still, as in the case of the living creatures and the elders, in their eyes the Cross outshines the whole creation, even their own creation, as a manifestation of the very heart of the all-loving God. Well, therefore, may they ascribe to Him all possible power and glory and blessing! Their words are no mere words of praise. They set forth what actually belong to the slain, but now risen and glorified Lamb; and they do so most heartily, as implying what they most willingly consecrate in consecrating themselves to the service of the newly-enthroned Lord and King. The last word, "blessing," expresses their very heart. It implies not only that He possessed all blessedness, and was the source of all good, but also that all holy creatures rejoiced in His blessedness, in some sense wished and willed it, and that they would do all in their power to prove their highest delight in the perfect, infinite and eternal blessedness of the Lamb,—of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the one glorious and ever-blessed God.

8. *Ver.* 13. "And every created thing which is in the heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and on the sea, and all things that are in them, heard I saying, Unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb (be) the blessing, and the honour, and the glory, and the dominion for ever and ever."

(1) In the fourth chapter, Jehovah had twice received the adorations and the praises of the living creatures and of the elders, emphatically in the character of universal Creator. In this fifth chapter we find the Lamb crowned and glorified. He twice receives the praises of redemption: *first* from the living creatures and the elders, and *next* from the whole assembly of angelic beings, appar-

ently sent to celebrate His coronation, and to acknowledge Him as universal King, and as, in virtue of His great Self-sacrifice, demonstrated to deserve thus to be regarded by all creatures within the boundless universe. Thus Jehovah is first worshipped, and Jesus is next glorified. Now the whole creation, apparently all in heaven included, and therefore those very ones who had been praising separately Jehovah and the Lamb, unite in praising them at once and as one, Jehovah and the Lamb. They ascribe to them all that they had ascribed to them successively. The throne henceforth becomes the throne of God and the Lamb. Jesus, viewed as the Divine, Self-sacrificing Redeemer, becomes the visible Organ of the Invisible God's universal administration; all creation submits to His control. In Christ all is summed up in One. He is the Centre of the entire universe. All unite in acknowledging Him as one with Jehovah, and as, like Him, the King of Glory, whom all delight to love, to obey, to glorify. How vast, how grand, how sublime a scene! What a universe thus seen! In what sense could it possibly have thus been at the date of the coronation—just after, as we have maintained, the ascension of Jesus Christ? In one sense all things silently praise and glorify Jehovah and Jesus Christ. Their very being does so. Their government does so. The very fact that they enjoy so much happiness does so. All things are full of the glory of Jehovah in Jesus, in so far as they are fitted to show forth His glorious mercy and grace to the guilty and unworthy. All who have eyes to see will thus behold the glory of God and the Lamb, and may be viewed as giving all glory and praise. However,

(2) We may perhaps more correctly regard this whole scene as stretching forward into the distant future, or, like the preceding song, be viewed as prophetic, a glimpse into the entire future being given, so as to show how the progressive work of Divine and redemptive grace would issue in a united, holy, happy universe, of which Jehovah and the Lamb, or Jehovah in Jesus Christ, would be the Centre, the uniting and harmonising power, the heart and soul and spirit, the all in all. We might have gone further, and said, with not a little confidence, that this closing scene so clearly involves the final and eternal result of the work of redemption, that we have in it the very strongest confirmatory proof of the correctness of our view of preceding ascriptions or songs of praise as in the highest sense anticipative or prophetic of the glorious future. As the tempted Saviour had all the kingdoms of the world, with all their glory, set before His mind, and falsely promised to Him on the condition of His commission of the sin of infidelity to the great God and King,

so now the triumphant Saviour has set before Him all worlds, all heaven and earth, with all the powers and glories of the universe, as His own united, true, vast, eternal kingdom, and all declared as His in virtue of his perfect and glorious faithfulness to that great God and King, even amidst all humiliation and suffering, up to death itself, the death of the Cross, and all declared to be His also by the suffrages and the loving and grateful acknowledgments of all holy and redeemed creatures.

9. *Ver. 14.* "And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the elders fell down and worshipped."

The representatives of Creation and Redemption thus close the universal worship, and show forth their perfect and profound assent: the former saying Amen, so let it be; and the latter worshipping, not Jehovah alone, as the Authorised Version has it, but doubtless Jehovah and the Lamb, or Jehovah in the Lamb, the one glorious and eternal Object of worship to the whole united, harmonious, and blessed universe. The redeemed are present only in their representative elders. The angels are present personally as well as representatively. The absence of the general assembly of the Church seems due to the fact that the Lamb is about to open the book and to unveil the progressive work of their conversion, conflicts, final conquest, and glory.

III.

CHAPTER VI.

THE OPENING OF THE FIRST SIX SEALS, OR THE PROGRESS OF THE REDEMPTIVE KINGDOM.

As now fully brought out, the Mosaic dispensation is ended. Christ has appeared in heaven, and has been glorified and crowned as Redeemer and King. As He said before His ascension, "All power hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth." With all this power and authority He is now clothed. He has taken His place on the Divine and eternal throne; and He now proceeds to open the great mysterious book. We have pointed to what we deem the exact date of the opening of this first seal—even between that of the ascension and that of the glorious descent of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. As already referred to, the gift of the promised Spirit was to follow the glorification of Jesus. When that Spirit came in all the miraculous and converting power

of Pentecost, a full practical demonstration was given that Jesus had reached His heavenly destination, and had received His glorious crown. By keeping this in view, we shall escape what we deem important errors due to the too common idea, that this great Conqueror went forth, not on the Day of Pentecost, but when John had this vision of Him in Patmos. True, John had been assured that he would be shown things to come rather than things already past. However, this vision, though carrying John back to the past, or to the beginning of the great warfare, wonderfully sets forth both the near and the distant future.

THE FIRST SEAL.

1. *Vers. 1, 2.* "And I saw, when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying, as with a voice of thunder, Come. And I saw, and behold, a white horse, and He that sat thereon had a bow; and there was given unto Him a crown; and He came forth conquering, and to conquer."

(1) "*And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard one of the living creatures saying, with a voice of thunder, Come.*"

The Lamb begins His mighty work. He opens one of the seals. A part of the volume would seem thus to have been unrolled, and the part opened practically read by what immediately followed, or by the appearance of the first and most pleasing of all the significant representations, that of the Rider on the white horse. John hears one of the living creatures saying or calling, as with a voice of thunder, a voice of mighty power which calls effectually. Some suppose this to have been the first of the living creatures previously described as like a lion; and this may have been the case. However, we have no proof, and do well to refrain from needless conjecture. It is more important to note, that the call is that of God or of the Lamb, a call which must be obeyed, and therefore the mighty voice of this mighty being is employed. The call is from heaven, for an agency which is to fight and to work on earth. Hence the propriety of the call, "Come," of the Revised Version, rather than "Come and see," of the Authorised. Though the agency symbolised may appear under one figure, it may really embrace a great multitude under one Leader, whose work or warfare may go on for ages. To call forth such an agency, Jehovah or Jesus may well be represented as using the voice of a seraph; so that the Gospel, like the Law, might be said, in some high sense, to have been given by the dispensation or at least interposition of angels.

(2) "*And I saw, and behold, a white horse, and He that sat thereon had a bow; and there was given unto Him a crown: and He came forth conquering, and to conquer.*"

a. Whatever the exact and full interpretation of this grand complex figure, no one can fail to see that some mighty contending and all-conquering agency is intended. In obedience to the call of thunder, this royal and invincible Warrior comes forth and appears before the rapt vision of John. This was no picture on the roll or on any canvas. In vision, all was living, moving, impressive reality. A crown was given to the Rider, by whom it is not said. We deem it of great importance to determine the right meaning of this majestic symbol. If we err here, we may expect to err throughout this vitally important chapter, and more or less throughout this entire Apocalypse. To no small extent the correct explication of this one mystic figure may be viewed as a key to the greater part of what follows. And here we may add, that this wonderful figure may symbolically set forth an immense amount of truth. To do so, in fact, is one of the most marvellous properties of the symbols of the book, and of the emblems and parables of the whole Bible. The mystic book is said to be full of writing; but it would require a very large book to delineate all that this one symbol is fitted to set forth to the spiritually and Scripturally enlightened mind. Of course the book, as written all over, was purely symbolic of what really existed in the Divine mind alone. The meaning of this one grand figure has been opening up through past generations, and will continue to open up through ages yet to come; whilst, from first to last, its power to enlighten and to cheer every earnest mind and heart makes it one of the most important and precious representations of Scripture.

b. So far as a general interpretation is concerned, all seems so clear and so simple, we might say, so self-evident, that we might wonder to find more than one view of the matter. Here we have, as before our eyes, so manifestly that One who is "fairer than the sons of men," and who has been, with such marvellous prophetic power, delineated in the forty-fifth Psalm, that the very thought of any other would seem dishonourable to the one great unique Character of all history. Assuredly, in one way or another, directly or indirectly, personally or representatively, "the Captain of salvation," the triumphant Messiah, the Hero of heroes, the King of kings, the Conqueror of conquerors, and He alone, is here. Of whom else would it or could it be said, that He came or went forth "conquering and to conquer," the resistless One, the Almighty?

Certainly no mere man, no Roman emperor, however mighty, could possibly be here. In what sense or in what way Christ may be viewed as thus going forth to war, we must consider.

In the meantime, He, it may be noted, appears alone, single-handed, without an army, without a soldier, as if the war were entirely His own. This has its meaning. Yet we must not press the idea too far, as it would not well apply to the three other horsemen. The captain and his whole army may appear under one and the same figure. Only the crown of either past victory or anticipated victory, would, in this case especially, be given to the leader. Before this date, He had indeed gathered a few soldiers, not such as one would think likely to conquer, and instructed them to wait at Jerusalem till they received the much-needed power from on high. With this reserve, He had given them the great apostolic commission. In due time and according to promise the wonderful power came down, the Rider on the white horse came forth, the first sermon was preached by the Apostle Peter, the arrows of the King went to three thousand hearts, the first and most glorious victory was achieved, those arrows killed only to make alive, the little army was greatly augmented, and the crowned Warrior went on "conquering and to conquer." The words of Watts, whether highly poetical or not, are at least illustrative of this:—

"Great was the day, the joy was great,
When the Divine disciples met;
Whilst on their heads the Spirit came,
And sat like tongues of cloven flame.

"What gifts, what miracles He gave!
And power to kill and power to save!
Furnished their tongues with wondrous words,
Instead of shields, and spears, and swords.

"Thus armed, He sent the champions forth,
From east to west, from south to north:
'Go, and your Saviour's Cross proclaim;
Go, teach all nations in My name.'

Thus were they called from on high. Thus, too, had they, and have we, as already said, an infallible proof that He, whom they saw ascending from the earth, had reached His heavenly destination and received His glorious crown.

c. Certain interpreters have carefully studied the details of this complex symbol. They have asked, What is really meant by the horse and the colour of the horse, by the bow and the like? All

this is proper. At the same time we may greatly err in seeking for some well-defined meaning for each minute detail of a symbol or parable of Scripture. Beyond the general idea of the sum of all the means of the spiritual conquest, we need seek no further conception of the design of the archer's bow. At the outset, the crown of past or coming victory became the brow of the Warrior better than the diadem of succeeding conquest and dominion; and yet it is possible to press the distinction between them too far. The crown and the kingdom had to be doubly gained,—gained by purchase, as indicated in the song of the preceding chapter,—and gained by conquest, as clearly set forth under this first opened seal. We cannot, then, go far astray in regarding this single crown as that of purchase, already fully completed, and the many diadems of which we afterwards read as those of many future conquests or of manifold achieved dominion.

But, what of the horse and the colour of the horse? We shall have to refer to this again. We simply regard it as subordinate to the Rider, and in some sense one with him, as giving him power and enabling him to move and act with the greatest energy and celerity. The real idea of Rider and horse combined is that of agency,—strong, swift, mighty agency. And we do well to keep this idea of agency fully in view. It matters not for what any rider contends, for evil as well as for good, rider and horse together symbolise such agency. And hence the frequent use of such a symbol in this Book. The colour of each of the four horses is evidently significant. The white is generally viewed as that of victory, conquest, triumph. This is correct so far as it goes. But evil may be victorious as well as good. Afterwards the armies of this great Conqueror are said to have white horses and to be clothed in white linen. Now, as the white linen signifies the righteousness of the Rider, may we not regard the white horse as significant of the righteous means used in the warfare? May we not add this idea to that of victory or of triumph in the case before us? Aught fanciful we would carefully avoid. Yet, may not this be at least implied in what is said of this very Conqueror in chap. xix. 11, "And I saw heaven opened: and behold, a white horse, and He that sat thereon, called Faithful and True: and in righteousness He doth judge and make war."

d. We now come to an important question: Are we to regard this crowned Conqueror as, in any real or personal sense, representative of Jesus Christ? If we do so, some would then say, we must find a like real person represented in the case of each of the three remaining symbols. It is urged, that homogeneity of sym-

bolism fully demands this. Nor is this without the greatest force. Hitherto we have for the most part spoken as if a direct personal reference were intended; and yet again and again we have alluded to His little army as that which was commissioned before the ascension, and actually led forth for the first and glorious campaign on the Day of Pentecost.

In this way we intended to leave this matter an open question. However, it seems better to deal fully with it. In doing so, we would remark that the first horseman is very peculiar, and to a very great extent distinguishable from the other three. We have said that the symbol is that of a mighty agency, by which the whole world was to be conquered or converted to Christ. This agency we have supposed Him, as just said, to lead forth to the first and most successful battle. The symbol, therefore, is not that of Christ viewed as in heaven, but of the entire agency by which the great warfare is carried on in this world. In so far as the likeness of the symbols is concerned, we must hold by the idea of four grand agencies rather than of one or more persons; and, therefore, we would keep by the idea of the sum of all the Christian or spiritual agencies employed by the great Commander. Still, in thus interpreting, we must not overlook one grand peculiarity—that, in this first case, Christ is really the all in all in both the crowned Conqueror and the conquering army. In the other cases, Christ may make use of the agencies symbolised, but cannot be identified with them. His spirit and heart can be in none of them. He can use them only as necessary evils, or for judicial purposes. By them He may rule the nations as with a rod of iron. In this case, however, He is really one with His army, the all in all of every soldier, aye, and of every weapon of the spiritual war. Just as He dwells in His people, and acts through them, do they or can they work or fight. Just as they declare the truth as it is in Him, do they wield those weapons which are not carnal, but spiritual, and mighty to the pulling down of the strongholds of the enemy.

If this identity between Christ and Christians, this Captain and His soldiers, be overlooked or set aside, then it becomes necessary to regard Christianity rather than Christ as here symbolised, if we are to be ruled by the law of the homogeneity of symbolism. However, if we keep that identity in view, we may, without any real violation of that law, regard Christ and Christianity as really one, and as thus both set forth in this one fine and suggestive symbol. This we think it important to do, because we think there can be no room to doubt the identity of the Rider upon the white horse here

with that of the nineteenth chapter, who must certainly be identified with the personal Christ. We would go further, and maintain that this identity is so certain that no law of homogeneity ought to be sufficient to constrain us to infer that Christianity is symbolised in the one case and Christ in the other.

Further, we would briefly refer to another objection, namely, that this view makes Christ at once the Mediatorial King who opens the seal, and the Crowned Warrior whom, by the voice of the seraph, He calls forth to war. This is true, but implies no real inconsistency, as Christ may be symbolised in more than one form at one and the same time. Thus is He represented as both Priest and Sacrifice. If Christ alone were meant, it would certainly be incongruous that He should, by that mighty voice, call Himself to come forth; but, when we remember that all Christian agency is called forth, and that in that agency Christ only indirectly appears, all seems simple. The mighty voice, or rather the mighty power symbolised by it, is most assuredly needed to call forth that army or Church of Christ, with which we have identified Christ, just as the Apostle Paul identifies Christ with himself—"I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

e. Though it may be unnecessary, we would guard against a misconception of our meaning in our reference to Christ viewed personally. Many are so accustomed to use the word, personal, of Christ's visible and bodily coming, that we may clearly show what we here mean. We certainly mean no such visible bodily presence: we mean simply and solely that kind of presence which He promised when He gave the apostolic commission, "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world"; or when He graciously said, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." The same kind of presence, too, we find symbolised by the Royal High Priest standing or walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks. In these, and in all such cases, He is most truly personally, but in no sense visibly and bodily, present. Too many seem so to identify His personal with His bodily presence, as apparently to think and speak of Him as personally in heaven and spiritually on earth. If we would speak correctly, we should speak of Him as personally both on earth and in heaven, but bodily and visibly in heaven, and spiritually and invisibly on earth. To some these remarks may seem needless; but in arguing the important point of the coming or comings of Christ, many show confusion of ideas by forgetfulness of this distinction.

f. We need not treat of all the many interpretations of this sublime and most instructive representation. The Præterists, or those who hold the early fulfilment of the Apocalypse, would deny a reference to many ages now past, and to all ages yet to come. This theory of interpretation cannot, we maintain, apply to almost any part of this prophetic Book. It has been refuted over and over again. We think the best and most palpable refutation of it will be found in the right interpretation of the Book as a whole. We shall, however, quote the following from Professor Moses Stuart, of Andover, whose work on the Apocalypse, though far from correct, is of real value in very many respects. He regards chaps. vi.—xi. as referring to the destruction of the Jewish state viewed as a persecuting power:—"When I say that the destruction of Jerusalem and the wasting of Judea are events predicted by this portion of the Apocalypse, I do not mean to be understood that Rev. vi.—xi. contains merely a *civil history* of the Jewish war. The prophetic portion is a *symbolical picture*; but not such a picture as to constitute a regular history of wars and calamities. In its very nature, most of it is generic, and not individual and specific. It should be noted that the conqueror in this case is not the *Lamb* himself, as in xix. 11, but is generalissimo (so to speak) of the invading army." How miserable an idea does this give of the opening of these seals! Christ had clearly predicted all this before He left the world; and why, then, speak of the impossibility of opening a book which had thus been opened by Christ before? In these chapters we shall find an allusion to all thus particularised by Stuart as forming, however, a mere fraction of the whole symbolised. The Royal Conqueror is no mere destroyer of evil. He is just the very reverse,—emphatically a Creator of good.

g. Dean Alford's work on the Apocalypse is of the very highest value. All students of this book, however they may often fail to agree with the excellent as well as learned author, cannot fail to be very greatly indebted to him. We may here quote the following:—"The horses and their riders are the various aspects of the Divine dispensation which should come upon the earth preparatory to the great day of the Lord's coming. As regards the first, the whole imagery speaks of *victory*. The horses of the Roman commanders in their triumphs were white. . . . The *bow* serves to identify the imagery here with that in Habakkuk iii. 9, where God goes forth for the salvation of His people; . . . even more strikingly with that in Psalm xlv. 4, 5. . . . The *crown* finds its parallel in the vision of Zech. vi., where, ver. 11, it is said, 'take silver and gold and

make crowns,' etc. *The going forth conquering, and in order to conquer*, can only, as it seems to me, point to one interpretation. The *νικῶν* might be said of any victorious earthly power, whose victories should endure for the time then present; but the *ὅνα νικήσῃ* can only be said of a power whose victories should last for ever. . . . Victory, we may safely say, on the part of that kingdom against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. . . . *Victory for God's Church and people*, the great key-note, so to speak, of all the Apocalyptic harmonies." Much of this is fine. He goes on to say, "And notice, that in this interpretation there is no lack of correspondence with the three visions which follow. All four are *judgments* upon the earth." No. As already said, the Rider on the white horse is no destroyer, but a great Creator of good, the great New-creative power, the Redeemer of mankind. Hence Alford immediately modifies what he thus says, and seems fully to mean: "The rider is not Himself, but only a symbol of His victorious power, the embodiment of His advancing kingdom as regards that side of its progress where it breaks down earthly power, and makes the kingdom of the world to be the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ." This implies vastly more than what we understand by a judgment. It contains a great part of the truth, but by no means the whole of it.

h. We may now refer to a theory of interpretation, which has been wonderfully elaborated by Mr. Elliott, in a work of enormous historical research, and of amazing ingenuity, and which has been deemed by many, not only the most popular, but also the most correct and satisfactory exposition of the Apocalypse. Even those who least agree with the author will find an immense amount of valuable matter in his work, and very much, too, calculated to be helpful towards what we deem a much more correct and satisfactory interpretation. With respect to this chapter, we differ from him about as far as it is possible to do so. Of it he says, "Its general subject I have presumed to be the *decline and fall*, after a previous *prosperous era*, of the empire of Pagan Rome. And first, the *chronology* of each vision, as fixed by the prophecy itself, is evidently a point most necessary to attend to: that of the first seal determining its symbol to signify what was to happen soon after the epoch of St. John's seeing the visions in Patmos; that of the second, third, and fourth, limiting them to events, or changes, that were to have commencing epochs each in chronological sequence to the events (or at least the main part of them) signified in the vision of the seal preceding." In this way the opening of the seals is

regarded as simply a revelation of a series of successive states of the pagan empire of Rome. To our mind this is quite sufficient to demonstrate the incorrectness of the entire theory. The whole creation called upon to open a book relating to the decline of the Roman Empire! And the Lamb crowned by all creation because worthy to give a historical prophecy of the vicissitudes of Pagan Rome, as if His highest work, and as if He were worthy to do so in virtue of nothing short of the great Self-sacrifice! No. Any one worthy to be a prophet at all, would, like other prophets, have been counted worthy to do all that, and vastly more than all that.

Again, Elliott has greatly erred as to the date of the going forth of the Rider on the white horse. He has allowed himself to be carried away with the mere words of promise as to the things to come to pass, as if many things past might not be set forth for the very purpose of revealing things to come. Thus the very Pentecostal date of the going forth of the crowned Conqueror must be kept in view, if His whole career, both before and even after, was to be rightly understood. This mistake as to date implies, according to Elliott himself, a distance of over sixty years; and so completely sets aside the supposed first period of Roman history, a period which must have begun within the reign of Tiberius and not within that of Nerva. As all the subsequent periods supposed by him are so far determined by the first, as we find him above saying, this first error is fatal to all his subsequent calculations.

As to the nature of this symbol, Mr. Elliott searched carefully through the pages of pagan literature, and especially of that of Rome; and, as a result, came to the conclusion that *the horse* was the fittest emblem of the Roman Empire, as, in the book of Daniel, was the ram of Persia, and the he-goat of Greece. The *bow*, again, of Crete, was connected with the Roman emperor who was born in that island. Thus was "the horse," the empire, and the crowned conqueror with "the bow," the emperor of Rome. The analogy of the *ram* and *he-goat* utterly fails; as they represented of themselves Persia and Greece, their kings included; whilst "the horse" is made to represent the empire of Rome alone or exclusive of the emperor, who, according to this theory, is represented by the rider. But who would thus separate between the horseman and his horse? Who would think of an emperor seated on the empire? As we have already said, in this complex symbol of horseman and horse we have simply a symbol of some mighty agency.

Further, Mr. Elliott, whose theory is so far based on the correspondence of the symbols, has violated this very principle in that,

whilst in the first three the emperor is the rider, in the fourth the rider is expressly called Death. Then, again, these four horsemen come at the call of the living creatures, whilst no such call is given in either of the two following visions; implying a distinction of which the theory takes no note. In fact, according to this theory, we have mere allusion to four distinct periods of Roman history, which are of no special importance to Christians for whose instruction these visions were given, instead of to four distinct agencies in direct and important connection with the rise and progress of the kingdom of Christ, in which all Christians are interested, and which they may easily appreciate. Such certainly is the first, that of the great and invincible Captain of salvation, now under consideration.

How vastly important to have the attention of the Church of all ages directed to the course of this great and glorious Leader! In comparison, how miserable the idea of keeping before that Church a mere piece of Roman history, which can give no useful lesson to any, and which can be known to only a few! Thus Mr. Elliott gives us nothing beyond what may interest the antiquary, and that as the result of the greatest research—that the prosperous period began at the death of the Emperor Domitian, in A.D. 96, ran through the reigns of Nerva, Trajan, Adrian and the two Antonines, and ended at the accession of Commodus, A.D. 180,—a sort of golden age, when human happiness was great, and wars successful, etc. The white horse was that of the Roman generals in their triumphal processions. At this period the crown, and not the diadem, was used by the emperors; and hence the crown of the vision. Then, though the period embraced the reigns of four others, Nerva has the honour of introducing the use of the bow, simply because he chanced to have been born in Crete, where the bow was specially emblematic. This seems quite sufficient to upset the whole theory. The Christian has not so far to seek the true origin of the bow of the vision. He has only to turn to Psalm xlv., where we read of the arrows of the royal rider bringing down the enemies of the king. We need not say more. The whole theory is really baseless, and leads only to a very low and barren conception of the whole book, the opening of whose seals is spoken of, in the preceding chapter, as of such vast importance.

i. Incomparably more precious and exalted is the true idea of the crowned Conqueror of this vision,—that of Christ in the kingdom of heaven, or of the kingdom of heaven in Christ, going forth to carry on the glorious warfare of this world's conversion to

God. The work is vast. It has been going on ever since. It is yet far from complete. Still more than enough has been achieved to give assurance of final victory. Even now there is no king on earth for one moment to be compared to King Jesus—not only in goodness, for this was always the case, but in what we call even visible power and glory in the eyes of the greatest and mightiest nations of the earth. No single crown or garland now rests upon His honoured brow. On His head already may be seen many a diadem of glorious conquest and wide dominion. His soldiers are now very many. Animated with His spirit, nay, really one with Himself, they are carrying His banner into every land. He has been leading them from conquest to conquest. They are daunted by no opposition. They run from no danger; they fly from no foe. On their banner they have inscribed, “The whole world for Christ,” and they know that He can and will lead them to victory.

THE SECOND SEAL.

2. *Vers. 3, 4.*—“And when He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, Come. And another horse, a red horse, came forth; and to him that sat thereon it was given to take peace from the earth, and that they should slay one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.”

(1) “*And when He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, Come.*” Some suppose that here we have a reference to the living creature like an ox. But here, as in the case of the first living creature, we have no evidence, and should not vainly conjecture. If it had been of consequence for us to know, we should doubtless have been informed. It seems far more important to inquire concerning the real order of the agencies symbolised in these visions. According to Mr. Elliott, four successive periods of Roman history are represented, one beginning where the preceding ended. Because vision follows vision, it has been common to infer that the agencies represented, like the periods of Mr. Elliott, must succeed one another also. But this need by no means be the case. Though the horsemen all started at the same, or nearly at the same time, the visions must have been given in succession. We shall find that, from the very nature of the agencies set forth, we must regard them as contemporaneous, and as all acting more or less powerfully together, and some acting with more or less frequent interruption, for a very long time, not only up to our own day, but most likely for many a year to come. This will appear perfectly evident as we proceed.

(2) "*And another horse, a red horse, came forth.*" All seem to agree that the red or fiery-red colour of this horse indicates the character of the agency intended, even that of strife, division, warfare, war in one form or another. Some would refer this to a time of distraction and bloodshed throughout the Roman empire; the peace of the preceding period being thus taken away. We have virtually set this view aside in treating of the theory of Mr. Elliott. The strife or warfare here intended we deem vastly greater and much more prolonged than that thus referred to, or than that of any one generation. We do not agree, however, with any who take this to be a symbol of strife or war in general. Nor do we suppose any one great war which may have been carried on in any one region or during any one period. The four great agencies are all in some way connected, and all used or overruled for the one grand purpose of that of the first, even the conquest of the world. The last three are all subordinate to the first. There may be endless strife, war, confusion in many parts of the world, and for many ages, and yet not necessarily here symbolised.

(3) "*And to him that sat thereon it was given to take peace from the earth, and that they should slay one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.*" The real key to this symbol appears to be given by Christ Himself (Matt. x. 34-36): "Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law: and a man's foes (shall be) they of his own household," taken along with His references to the wars between nation and nation, kingdom and kingdom, in Matt. xxiv. In fact, we have here a reference to war as it is represented in the Old Testament as well as in the New—as a mighty power wielded by the hand of God or of Christ in the course of providence, in order to overthrow the enemies of the Divine Kingdom, to remove obstacles to its progress, and to prepare the way for its ultimate triumph.

We may say, that the same word for sword (*μάχαιρα*) is used both here and in Matt. x., so that we may view it as symbolic of all kinds of personal strife as well as of national war. We need not say that the words of the Prince of Peace above quoted are by no means inconsistent with His own gracious spirit, or with the peaceful end of His mission. They refer, not to the intended end of the gospel, which is the gospel of peace, but to the result of the

reception of that gospel in awakening the opposition, and, it may be, in creating enmity in the hearts of those who reject it. Strife thus begins within the domestic circle ; but may soon go far beyond it. The peace of a community or that of a whole nation may be broken. Persecution may thus arise and spread far and near. Christians may thus fearfully suffer. Still all can be overruled for good. But we would by no means confine the symbolic reference to such persecution. Many a national contest may be included. International war may be overruled for the opening up of a way for the heralds of the truth. As in the case of all the wars by which the Roman Empire was established, and thus a vast field secured for the fulfilment of the Apostolic commission, "Go ye into all the world," etc., so in the case of other wars, such as those of Great Britain in the East, like vast fields have been prepared for the free and safe missionary labours of recent times.

We by no means suggest that nominally Christian nations have the shadow of a right, or can claim the slightest encouragement, to subdue feebler peoples, in order to provide for the wider preaching of the gospel. We simply say that war may be overruled, however cruel and unjust in itself, for the preparation of a wider field for the diffusion of the truth. Jesus is faithfully represented in prophecy (Isa. xlii. 2), as gentle in spirit, and as wielding no power or weapon of the mere warrior. So, too, Paul describes his weapons as not carnal, but spiritual. Above all, Christ Himself describes His kingdom as not of this world, as otherwise His servants would fight. Still, in the same chapter of Isaiah, Jehovah, in working along with the Prince of Peace, is set forth as wielding the terrible power of the physical forces, and as using war itself to execute His judicial purposes, and to put down the enemies of His people. So Jesus may, consistently with His mission of peace, make use of the hostilities of nations, in order to rule them, as He is said to do, with a rod of iron, because of their persistent rejection of the truth, and remorseless persecution of His people.

This might be endlessly illustrated. We might instance the case of the destruction of the Jewish nation by the power of Rome, or that of Pagan Rome itself by the invasions of the northern barbarians. From this it will appear that this horseman represents not only one mighty power, but a countless number of powers, more or less mighty, at work in many places, through many ages, and yet, it may be, with many interruptions. To him was given "a great sword," a sword doing an immense amount of deadly work. To understand this fully, we must not think of any one great war, or

even of any number of great wars, but of all the wars and strifes, small as well as great, included in this one mighty agency, through all the times referred to, and then, summing up the vast multitude of the suffering and the slain, judge how great the one sword or the one warrior here presented to view. In directing attention to this, we have a less direct design—namely, of saying that here we have a most instructive example of the grouping together, under one symbol, of a vast number and variety of the same kind of agency.

Here we have all the strifes of ages gathered up into one vast sum, and symbolised by this mighty warrior with his great sword. So we might have said of all the countless agencies, influences, operations, preachings, teachings connected with the diffusion of the gospel and the establishment of the kingdom of Christ, gathered up into one grand whole, and presented to our minds in the vision already considered of the Great Conqueror and yet Prince of Peace, the crowned Warrior on the white horse, with no great sword, but with the simple bow in his hand. So also, in the case of the next two visions, we may easily see two quite distinct kinds of agency, represented by totally different symbols, under each of which are grouped or gathered up innumerable instances of want up to famine, or like innumerable instances of suffering up to the most terrible forms of death. Nearly the same thing might be said of the vision of the martyrs or martyr-church, which, we are assured, relates to no one period of persecution or to any special cases of martyrdom, but to all the sufferings of the Church for ages and in many lands, and up to the most fearful kinds of death. These are all summed up under the one striking and touching altar of human sacrifice.

Now, when we find this manner of classifying agencies and objects under one symbol, shall we not find the vision of the sixth seal of precisely the same nature—not representative, as almost universally supposed, of some one day or time of vast and seemingly final judgment, but symbolical of the sum of all the judgments of God against the unbelieving, impenitent, opposing, and persecuting world at different times, in different places, and from the time of Christ down to the end of the period expressly referred to in the fifth vision, when the second great class of martyrs should be completed or the second depressed and persecuted state of the Church ended? We thus anticipate, because we think it well to keep this feature of these symbolic representations fully in view, if we would reach any clear or satisfactory interpretation of them.

THE THIRD SEAL.

3. *Vers. 5, 6.* "And when He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, Come. And I saw, and behold, a black horse; and he that sat thereon had a balance in his hand. And I heard as it were a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and the oil and the wine hurt thou not."

(1) "*And when He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, Come. And I saw, and behold, a black horse; and he that sat thereon had a balance in his hand.*" Such is the fit symbol of the third class of the grand agencies employed in the advancement of the kingdom of Christ, and in the overthrow of all opposing powers. They who will not have the bread of life which endures for ever may soon be in want of the bread which perishes, and without which they must perish. The colour of this horse, like that of the preceding, corresponds with the end in view, or with the nature of the agency intended. These two, and that which follows, are all to be regarded as appointed in order to the great end of the final victory of the crowned conqueror. The terrible agency of scarcity, want, famine, including all degrees of the same evil, just as we had all degrees of strife, is doubtless here meant, and that beginning very early, as in the case of the awful sufferings of the Jewish nation, and as afterwards in that of the Roman Empire. Through all intervening times, up to the present, the same destructive power has been again and again wielded. The nation that will not serve Zion or Zion's King shall perish. The day of salvation and the day of vengeance are never far apart. This view of this symbol is supported by Matt. xxiv.; so that we need not take it as a symbol, as some have done, of a famine of the bread of life.

(2) "*And I heard as it were a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and the oil and the wine hurt thou not.*" A balance is a fine emblem of justice. Here it must be taken in connection with the special purpose, or as a measure of weight. In the Old Testament we find scarcity threatened in words illustrative of this: Ezek. iv. 10, 11, "And thy meat which thou shalt eat shall be by weight. . . . And thou shalt drink water by measure." The denarius or penny has been reckoned the usual pay of a soldier, and the chœnix, here rendered measure, the usual provision of a soldier; if he used wheat there would be no means of

securing the other necessities of life. He must therefore feed on the cheaper grain, and then he could hardly supply the wants of a family. A very great scarcity, if not an actual famine, is thus implied. Much has been said of the seemingly obscure expression which follows, "And the oil and the wine hurt thou not," as to which Alford remarks, "Not as Heinrichs, and 'recently Elliott, 'do thou not commit injustice in the matter of the oil and the wine.' The usage of this book should have prevented such an interpretation; for ἀδικεῖν with the accusative of the material object hurt or injured is the constant habit of our writer, and in no case do we find the other construction used by him, or indeed by any other writer to my knowledge, except with such general adverbial accusatives as *τι* and *οὐδέν*—*c, g.*, Gal. iv. 12. . . . As regards the meaning, the spirit of the saying is: the rider. . . . is limited in his desolating action by the command given, that enough is to be reserved for sustenance. Wheat, barley, oil, and wine, formed the ordinary sources of nourishment. . . . It is the mercy of God, tempering His judgments. And in its general interpretation, as the opening of the first seal revealed the certain proceeding on to victory of Christ and His Church, and the second that His coming should be prepared in the world not by peace but by the sword, so now by this third we learn that famine, the pressure of want on men, not sweeping them away by utter failure of the means of subsistence, but keeping them far below the ordinary standard of comfort, and especially those who depend on their daily labour, will be one of the four judgments by which the way of the Lord's coming will be assured."

This is most valuable. Yet the latter part, relating to the general interpretation, is seriously injured by what we deem Alford's mistaken view of a reference to the coming of Christ. As we have already observed of all these agencies, they begin with the time of Christ, and run on for ages and in many lands, and are all determined by God according as they contribute to the progressive establishment of the kingdom of heaven or conversion of the world to God. The voice from the throne seems to be that of God or of the Lamb, giving the commission here expressed; whilst the simplest and most satisfactory meaning to be attached to the words relating to the oil and the wine, seems to be that this agent is to exercise a limited power in the destruction of the means of life. The prices of wheat and barley are not to be let down to those of a famine severity. The same idea seems to be attached to the words which seem so obscure: do not go so far as to touch the oil and the wine, or what may be called the luxuries rather than

the necessities of life; do not go so far as to make even the rich feel the pinch of want, not because they may not deserve it, but because, if the scarcity reach the richer classes, the poor must most terribly suffer. This interpretation is in perfect harmony with that of the two preceding visions, and will be found to be the same with the next.

Mr. Elliott having confessedly failed to find, in Roman history, a period of scarcity, such as is here indicated, following that assigned by him to the wars of the preceding vision, has endeavoured to show that no real famine or scarcity is here intended. He does so by referring to the word *choenix*, here rendered a measure, as the common name for a variety of measures. The balance, again, he regards as "the constant sign of *equity*, and the *cautioning* or directive words addressed to the rider" as "against injustice and wrong." Having, as he thinks, set aside the idea of famine, he finds a period of "aggravated oppressiveness of the taxation, consequent on a famous *edict of the Emperor Caracalla*. . . . A voice went forth, charging it on every provincial president and procurator in his station, in no one point to defraud or oppress." The very statement that a grand vision, such as any one of those here given, should be taken up with such an insignificant and obscure matter of Roman history, seems quite sufficient to prove that Mr. Elliott's theory is fundamentally wrong. He utterly fails to show that the most natural and common idea of famine is incorrect; and, as said, he confesses that a period of famine cannot be found where it ought to have been clearly discoverable, on the supposition of the correctness of his whole theory of interpretation,—a theory to set aside which we shall find reason after reason, as we advance. Here, instead of pointing to a most mighty power affecting the progress of the Christian Church, and most worthy of such a significant symbol as that of this most important vision, we are directed to what has been lost to almost all readers of Scripture, and to what, even if universally known, would be fruitless of the smallest amount of moral or spiritual good.

Instead of this the question of the abundance or scarcity of the necessities of human life, involving a great variety of questions relating to the whole engagements of human beings, is of vast importance in relation to the Christian as well as the civil or political condition and progress of the world. The voice, in coming from amidst the four living creatures, seems clearly to indicate that the scarcity or famine, and all that may arise out of it, must not be

traced to any mere natural causes or accidental circumstances, but devoutly recognised as determined by Him who sits upon the throne, or by the Lamb, who, in opening these seals, may be justly said to call forth one and all of the mighty and varied agencies symbolised. We might illustrate at the greatest length, from recent as well as from more distant times, the vast power wielded by Christ, not only in the punishment of hostile and persecuting nations, but also in the conversion of countless individuals to God, by means of that thoughtfulness and anxiety, which the pressure of want, more or less deeply felt, has created in the minds and hearts of men. We might illustrate the use of such pressure in preparing the hearts of those who suffer for the reception of kindly Christian help, and thus for the appreciation of that religion which seeks the welfare of the poor and the distressed as no other religion has ever done. In these very days the converting power of Christian self-denial in order to helpful benevolence, has been very marked in the history of Christian missions in various regions—we may say, in times of scarcity rising even to famine, in India and China. Who can tell how many have been led to Christ through the kindness of Christians in times of difficulty and want?

THE FOURTH SEAL.

4. *Vers. 7, 8.* "And when He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, Come. And I saw, and behold, a pale horse: and he that sat upon him, his name was Death, and Hades followed with him. And there was given unto them authority over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with famine, and with death, and by the wild beasts of the earth."

(1) "*And when He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, Come. And I saw, and behold, a pale horse: and he that sat upon him, his name was Death; and Hades followed with him.*" Here, as also connected with the work of the crowned Warrior, we find a most awful symbol of Death with Hades following. Though scarcity may rise to famine, and famine lead to death, there was room for this representation of the king of terrors, viewed as a separate agency in the awakening of the minds and consciences of men, and thus preparing the way for the reception of the gospel as well as for executing the Divine judgments against the impenitent and persecuting opponents of the gospel, whether individuals or communities. They seem to take a correct view, who do not identify this rider with pestilence, which is evidently after-

wards referred to under the name of death. Like that of every other, the colour of this horse is in keeping with the character and work of the horseman, or with the nature of the agency intended. It is in keeping with the universal idea of death, as expressed by the words "*Pallida Mors*,"—pale green, or yellowish green, livid, such as appears before and after death. The symbol is not of any one kind of death, but simply of death itself, death of every kind, yet not of all death, but here of death viewed as a terrible, resistless, destructive power or agent wielded, as already said, in connection with the progress of the kingdom of Christ. Hades, the place of the departed, the receptacle of the dead, "like a hearse," as it has been said, follows as an attendant ready to do the fearful work of swallowing up all struck down by the remorseless leader.

(2) "*And there was given unto them authority over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with famine, and with death, and by the wild beasts of the earth.*" Whether we translate "power" with the Old Version or "authority" with the New, the idea of commission is here clearly implied, and this seems to imply the propriety of the observation that not all death, but all such death as it was designed to make subservient to the will of the first rider, was alone intended. We may quote the following from Alford:—"*'Power over a fourth part of the earth' (ἐπι with access, as extending over, spreading over). . . . The expositors for the most part pass it over, merely as signifying a considerable portion. . . . Death' (i.e., here, pestilence) . . . the enumeration comprehends the 'four sore judgments' . . . (Ezek. xiv. 21), and in the same terms. . . . This fixes the meaning of this second and subordinate θανάτω as above. . . . One feature common to these four is, Personification: the presentation of processions of events by the impersonation of their leading features.*" This is exceedingly good. The expositors, as above remarked, have not done much to show what is really intended by "the fourth part of the earth." They generally regard simply a great part as meant. But it would be hard to find any one time or period distinguished by such destruction of human life.

Perhaps the view we have been taking of these agencies, as made up of a vast variety of operations and the like, spread over, not only a large part of the earth, but also over the whole period of many ages, to which these six visions are related, may form the true key to the extent of the dominion assigned to this terrible power. We would not take the expression, "the fourth part,"

literally, and we would lengthen indefinitely the time of that dominion, and, still further, we would suppose both places and times of more or less extensive destruction. In this way we would interpret the whole of the employment of death of every form, or by all instrumentalities, as wielded, to a vast extent, in connection with the progress of the gospel, and for the twofold purpose of putting down the enemies of the kingdom of heaven, and of exerting a mighty influence on the minds and consciences and hearts of men in order to their "repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ." The fact that famine is here introduced as the means of death tends to confirm the view taken of the preceding symbol as not setting forth famine in its more deadly form and as thus to be identified with death.

Such, then, are all these grand agencies here symbolised. They do not follow one another through so many distinct consecutive periods: all are or may be at work together. Nor need we suppose them to act with equal intensity or without interruption. Setting forth such an infinite number of operations and the like, all grouped under four heads, these agencies could not possibly be symbolised unless in the most general way. To look for particular events in history under what must be so general, would be utterly vain. Yet all Christian experience and all history of the Church and of the world testify to the reality and power of the agencies symbolised. We have not to search into the pages of Roman or of any other history in order to aid us in the interpretation of these four most important visions. We may see all the four emblematic horsemen riding forth before our very eyes, and fulfilling the work specially assigned to each. They give us a large, a clear, and a most impressive view of the whole course of Providence in relation to the work of human redemption as carried on in many lands and from age to age. The responsibilities of individuals and the destinies of nations are here presented in the most striking manner. No one can read this chapter with intelligence and reflection without finding, not only what may interest the inquiring spirit, but also what pertains to the present and eternal well-being of himself.

THE FIFTH SEAL.

5. *Vers. 9-11.* "And when He opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held; and they cried with a great voice, saying, How long, O Master, the Holy and True, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And there was given to them to each one a white robe; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little time, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed even as they were, should be fulfilled."

(1) "*And when He opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held.*" The four living creatures do not now appear. This change is by no means arbitrary or unintelligible. They have to call forth no mighty agency, as in each of the preceding seals. Nor can we suppose any such agency so called forth to effect what we here find so impressively represented—even a sad and awful result. Whilst the four agencies have been at work, the martyrdom of many of the most excellent and faithful followers of the Lamb has taken place. When Christ spoke of the strife and hostility which would follow the preaching of the Gospel, He had doubtless the sufferings of His people in view—sufferings of which He warned them again and again. His Church would increase and wax stronger and stronger. Yet many a faithful witness would fall; and, in point of real condition, might experience the greatest worldly depression, when enjoying the highest spiritual prosperity. So long as the hostile people were strong and persecuting, the Church might well be called a martyr-church, and so might well be represented by those who, as here said, were actually "slain for the Word of God."

We do not at all suppose that any one period of persecution is here intended. As we have brought out already, in the four preceding visions we have symbolised the entire sum of all the agencies and operations throughout a long period, and not any one mighty agency acting at one time and with highest force. So here we have not the martyrs of any one age or country set forth, but all the martyrs of that long period through which these agencies continue to work. Further, we cannot limit the reference of this vision to martyrs now usually so called, or even to them along with all other confessors and sufferers who may

not have been actually put to death, but must extend it to the whole Church, also throughout that same long period in so far as that Church was a suffering Church, or as we have said, could be called a martyr-church. The representation of the death of martyrs does not naturally or fitly symbolise the death of martyrs. This would simply be to make martyrs represent martyrs. Martyrs, however, may be naturally and fitly used to represent or to symbolise a depressed, suffering, persecuted, martyr-church or people. This we take to be what is here intended. Of course in a martyr-church all actual martyrs would be included. Here, then, we have all such included, from the martyr Stephen down to the last like sufferer, through all the period to which we have again and again referred.

John, we are told, saw the souls of such underneath the altar, the altar of sacrifice, the altar of burnt-offering and not that of incense—the altar at whose foot the blood of the sacrificial victim was poured out. Of course it could not possibly be called the altar of sin-offering; for there alone the King of martyrs was sacrificed for sin. The whole burnt-offering signified entire self-sacrifice or self-consecration or self-devotement to God; and this is what is here doubtless intended. In relation to the persecuting people, it was a great crime; but in relation to the sufferers, who preferred death to unfaithfulness to the Master or Sovereign to whom they here appeal, it was a pure, voluntary and glorious act of self-sacrificing love. Some have asked, What shall we say of souls thus underneath the altar and yet doubtless in heaven? This is a needless question. The allusion is simply to the literal altar, with the blood representative of the life poured out. The shedding of blood, the sacrifice of life, is thus represented.

(2) “*And they cried with a great voice, saying, How long, O Master, the Holy and True, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?*” This cry so far resembles that of the first of all the martyrs, or that of the blood of righteous Abel. But, taking the suffering Church of Christ as represented, we have a fine illustration in what is said of the cry of Israel as oppressed by the Egyptians. Their cry went up to Jehovah their God. These martyrs were misjudged, because the whole Church or people of whom they formed a part was misjudged. They were simply identified with the whole Church, and treated accordingly. In them the Church suffered. The cry was thus the cry of the whole suffering Churches. Simply as the cry

of unjust suffering, and apart from the spirit of the sufferers, it was a cry for vengeance to the righteous Ruler of the world. But, whilst there may be supposed no unchristian spirit of revenge, there may be more than supposed a right and holy and noble spirit of desire that their character should be justified, that the misrepresented and injured cause, for which they suffered, should be vindicated. No personal vengeance was asked, and, as they were to rest a while till all was rectified, no personal vengeance was pledged or executed.

The very fact that the real vengeance was to be so long delayed well harmonises with the view we take, that the whole depressed and suffering Church of many ages is intended by this martyr-vision. This vengeance is to be inflicted ultimately on "them that dwell on the earth," an expression which we do well to remember, as it again and again occurs, and which points to those who continue impenitent and unbelieving, "whose portion is in this life," whose heart with their treasure is on earth; whilst another expression, "them that dwell in heaven," points to true Christians, whose heart with their treasure is in heaven, who are risen with Christ, and who sit with Him in heavenly places. These two classes are, and always have been, antagonistic. The antagonism, in all its degrees, up to that of deadly persecution, is here referred to. Through it the Church suffers enormously; even when no persecution appears within the domestic circle, the ridicule or the laugh of contempt is due to it. All the sufferings of the Church, great or small, and of every kind, are here set forth; and how they are avenged we seem clearly to find in the visions of the sixth seal, which immediately follows. In the one seal we see how the world deals with the Church; in the other we see how God deals with the world.

(3) "*And there was given to them, to each one a white robe.*" Whatever the vengeance, and come when it may, they were to be vindicated, their character defended, their faithfulness openly magnified. Some have supposed that this white robe is that given as they entered the heavenly state. However, the altar of sacrifice is supposed to be on earth, their sufferings were on earth, the misrepresentation of their character was on earth; and we take the white robe of vindication to be given on earth. By such a robe seems thus meant, whatever more, some token of Divine approval, some acknowledgment of righteousness, some marked justification of the faithful conduct

and precious testimony for which they suffered. Now, if, as we have supposed, they represented the cause and kingdom of Christ, and their persecutors represented the unbelieving world, their full and open vindication might take place at some distant time through the triumph of the Church over the world; and this seems implied in the words which follow. But something more immediate seems here spoken of. Of course, the speedy triumph of the Gospel would, to all intents, be an early vindication. It was so in the case of the Prince of martyrs Himself. Pentecost was His most ample and glorious vindication. So in all lands the visible and most precious fruits of the Gospel soon vindicate the character of its first preachers, who may have suffered and died on account of it. Stephen soon became a glorious martyr; so it has been with many a Christian hero since. This is true individually of Christians; and it is true collectively of Churches. We seem to have a fine illustration of how the faithful servants of Christ may be speedily exalted, in the epistle to the Church in Philadelphia,—“Behold, I give of the synagogue of Satan, of them who say they are Jews, and they are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee,” of which we can see the force, if we mark what had been said of these in the epistle to the Church in Smyrna,—“I know the blasphemy” (the reviling, the misrepresentation, the calumny) “of them who say they are Jews, but are a synagogue of Satan.” The true conversion of these slanderers by the special grace bestowed on those slandered, and by the abundant success achieved by them, formed a most practical and triumphant vindication of them. A white robe may be said to have been given to every one of them. When Saul the persecutor was converted, Stephen the persecuted was robed in white and crowned with gold.

In keeping with this, we know of no better idea than that of the praise and glory of martyrdom, which they came soon to enjoy, not only by fellow-Christians who saw them suffer, nor only by Christians who soon followed them, but even by the men of the world who have always been constrained to honour “the whole army of martyrs” of every age and country. So the Jewish enemies of Christ and His apostles magnified the prophets and martyrs of former times. So to this day the corrupt Churches glorify the martyrs of early days, whom they would themselves have persecuted, and whom they may be justly said

to have actually persecuted in the persons of their real successors. Thus, then, all along the line, martyrs and martyr-churches have received white robes of speedy justification; whilst all of them, the martyrs and the Churches represented by them, are expressly told that, for their final and highest glorification on earth, and for the final and most fearful condemnation of the unbelieving and opposing world, they must look forward to the end of that long period of continued conflict and complete conquest, which will come in due time. Hence,—

(4) “*And it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little time, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed even as they were, should be fulfilled.*” They are spoken of in relation to this world, and are simply viewed as dead and so at rest. They are not here spoken of at all in relation to heaven, where, all the while alluded to, they never rest, but are always engaged in the joyous and perfectly holy service of God. The thought of their ceasing so to rest, and therefore of their rising in some way from the dead, is there naturally suggested. We say, “in some way,” because we have to consider whether they are to be regarded in this vision personally or representatively. If personally, then their resurrection must apparently be also personal; but if representatively or symbolically, then the real resurrection must be that of the depressed, persecuted, crushed, martyr-church or cause which they represent or symbolise. This may be put in a simple light. Let us ask, What do we actually see in the course of Christian history as we contemplate this vision of John? Do we see only those who actually suffered martyrdom? or do we see the whole Church of Christ, for a long time, more or less oppressed and persecuted, not, it may be, without interruption, but at least very often, and almost always when first planted in any country, and, we may add, at some special times, and by two special classes of persecutors, as here alluded to? We seem most clearly to see both, but, most assuredly, the former as symbolising the latter, or the latter as symbolised by the former.

The death of the martyrs, then, represents the depression of the Christian Church or Christian cause; and the triumphant elevation of the Christian cause or Christian Church will be afterwards represented by the resurrection of the martyrs. The death and resurrection are symbolic. The depression and the elevation are real. But, what of this rest or delay? Others, brethren and fellow-servants, are in the future to suffer in like

manner, before the final and perfect vindication of all shall be accomplished. There seem thus to be two distinct classes of martyrs, or two successive periods of the depression of the Christian Church or Christian cause, as we have just been pointing out.

Here the words would certainly not of themselves require such a twofold division. Still, when considered in the light of the twentieth chapter, we must put this meaning upon them; the first class in that chapter being described as here, and the second class being those who were persecuted by the beast, and who would not receive his mark or do his will. Some have supposed a reference to the martyrs before and after the time of Christ. But this is by no means the case. We deem those more correct who regard them as the persecuted by Pagan Rome in the first instance, and by Papal Rome in the second. However, we must not exclude the persecuted Church among the Jews, as represented by Stephen and others. We, in fact, regard the first class as symbolising the sufferings and sorrows of the Christian Church during its long conflict with the world up to the time of its triumphant progress, and before it was perverted, corrupted and paganised, or was transfigured into a new and most mysterious form of Paganism; and the second class as symbolising the sufferings and sorrows of the same Church, revived and so far restored, during its long conflict with this new Paganism or with this corrupt, paganised and persecuting Church. In so saying, however, we would not by any means exclude the sufferings and sorrows of the Church as gradually freeing herself from this new Paganism and becoming more and more pure, enlightened and apostolic, in its conflict with those imperfectly renewed or reformed Churches which retained the persecuting spirit of the paganised Church from which they were led to withdraw.

THE SIXTH SEAL.

6. *Vers. 12-17.* "And I saw when He opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the whole moon became as blood; and the stars of the heaven fell unto the earth, as a fig tree casteth her unripe figs when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven was removed as a scroll when it is rolled up; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the princes, and the chief captains, and the rich, and the strong, and every bondman and freeman, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains; and they

say to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb : for the great day of their wrath is come ; and who is able to stand ? ”

This awful vision of judgment appears most naturally to follow that of martyrdom. As already said, the one unveils the treatment of the Church by the opposing and persecuting world ; whilst the other sets forth the world as accordingly and judicially dealt with by God. They evidently refer to one and the same time or times. Doubtless both point to one final day of reckoning, when the whole past shall, as it were, be judicially reviewed ; the suffering Church vindicated and rewarded ; and the opposing and persecuting world condemned and punished. Still, as we seem to have every reason for regarding the one vision as that of the suffering Church through this long period to which we have more than once alluded ; so we seem to have like reason for viewing the other vision as that of the guilty world through the same period. We have pretty fully set forth this period. In this all the visions or successive representations appear fully to agree. The vision of the Conqueror embraces all the agencies and operations and influences at work in order to the successive issue of His mighty spiritual warfare. So the second vision unveils all the strifes, wars and the like, connected with the whole course of this contest. The same may be said of the visions of scarcity of every degree, and of death in every form. As the next vision is that of all the depression and sufferings of the Church during the same period of contest, we seem more than warranted in concluding that the same is true of the scene of judgment here so awfully disclosed.

The entire sum of the judgments of God on the opposing and persecuting world is thus gathered up and set forth as if it were one and only one judgment. In the proper interpretation of this and of other parts of this Book, nay, of prophecies in other parts of Scripture, the principle of perspective must be used. Take the case of a mountain. Let it be seen from one point of view, and it appears a long chain of hills, higher and lower, till at last it rises to its greatest height, and that highest part we naturally regard as the real mountain. Let it be seen from another point, and the whole successive line of hills thus rising up is lost to the eye of the beholder, and the same highest part appears on the horizon in majestic conical form as the one and only mountain to be seen at all. So, to the unveiled eye of the seer, a whole series

of the same kind of objects, say, as here, of judgments, may have been so presented as to appear one and the same mighty judgment of God. So it was with the coming of Christ for the judgment of the unbelieving Jewish nation and His coming for the judgment of the unbelieving world. Christ describes them in such a way as to suggest to many that He refers to one and only one, and that the final judgment. So here, we take the vision to include all the great national judgments inflicted on the persecutors of the Church from the time of Christ down to the last of the long period in question. Here we find the judicial treatment of the Jewish people for the rejection of their Messiah. Here, too, we find the like treatment of Pagan Rome for the persecution of the Church. The entire Pagan government, with all who upheld it and shared in its character and worldly good,—emperors, captains, bondmen and freemen,—are all judged, condemned, and swept away from their former place. In symbol, every mountain and every island were moved out of their places. And so of all other opposing and persecuting nations.

This does not imply that all the people of these nations are to perish. By conversion they take the place of the Church, and so are exalted; whilst the unconverted are swept from their places of power, and the persecuting rulers and government are thus swept away for ever. So it has been, so far at least, with Papal nations. We might give illustration on illustration of this vision as thus interpreted. Instead of having to look forward to the unknown future for some one great judgment, as if no fulfilment had taken place, we may look back upon a whole line of judgments, which have altered the whole face of Europe, and which are still altering it from time to time. See how the temporal kingdom of the Pope has been swept away and made an important part of the increasingly prosperous kingdom of United Italy. See how persecuting Spain was cast down from her mighty ascendancy at the time of the Reformation, to become one of the lowest and basest kingdoms of Europe. That this wide view of the vision is correct may be said to be justified by the fact that, if only some one great future judgment were meant, then all the persecuting nations of the whole line but the last would not be represented as condemned and punished at all: for here, the final and universal judgment of mankind is certainly not intended, but a judgment or a series of judgments inflicted in this world on guilty peoples.

Some would, indeed, maintain, that the whole vision is too

awful to set forth anything short of that final judgment. These, however, seem to forget whence the figurative representation of this vision so far came. In Isaiah xiii. we have at least such a description of the doom of Babylon as ought to show that nothing is here said to imply that the judgment or judgments intended are more than simply national. Here, the strongest expressions may be said to refer to the sun and moon and stars. If they are so to be affected, some may say, then the end of all things must have come. But what does Isaiah say of Babylon,—“Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger; . . . for the stars of heaven and constellations thereof shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. . . . Therefore I will make the heavens to tremble, and the earth shall be shaken out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of His fierce anger.” If such be the figurative representation of the day of Jehovah’s wrath in the judgment of Babylon, surely the vision before us need be regarded as no more than a like representation of the day of the wrath of the Lamb because of the sum of all the persecutions of His own people in many lands and for many ages.

Such, then, we take this vision to mean. At the same time we have said that the vision carries us down to the close of the Christian conflict, specially with the two great persecutors of the true Church of Christ, Pagan and Papal Rome, as we think will by-and-by appear. We may at present only say that light seems to be thrown on this in chaps. xv. 1, xvi. 21, and xix. 15; in fact, in all that is said of the fall of spiritual Babylon, and of the capture of the first and second beast, and of the destruction of the kings and captains, etc., of the earth, and even, as here, of “the free and the bond.” In like manner the great earthquake connected with this very time, the fall of Babylon, is spoken of in chap. xvi. 18. But, whilst the judgment of nations is thus put specially before us in this vision, we think it would be quite wrong to regard it as not also inclusive of countless individual acts of awful judicial treatment. Just as the other visions relate to countless individual as well as collective agencies, so we may be assured the like relation to individual oppositions and persecutions is here also intended, though in all its reality and fulness the Divine treatment of individuals is reserved for the great day of final judgment.

IV.

CHAPTER VII.

*VISIONS OF THE SEALED ON EARTH AND THE
REDEEMED IN HEAVEN.*

THESE two visions, coming between the opening of the sixth and that of the seventh seal, may appear quite independent and connected with neither. The more carefully, however, they are considered, the more clearly will they be seen to pertain to the one great period to which we have so often referred, and to be in fact supplementary to all the visions of the first six seals. Some would look for one special time at which the whole work of sealing was accomplished. This we deem a great mistake. Very much pertaining to the kingdom of heaven had been symbolised under these six seals ; but, without these additional visions, very much would have remained unveiled. The nature and success of the warfare of the Crowned Conqueror would have little appeared. The sealing vision sets forth the real character of those who yield to this Captain of salvation, and so become at once His brethren, and the sons and servants of the living God. The second vision will be found, we think, to make known the real success of the Gospel during the whole period of the contest between the Church and the world, or what we may call the pre-millennial period, the period between the time of Christ and that of the triumph of the Gospel in the conversion of the world.

1. *Vers. 1-3.* "After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that no wind should blow on the earth, or on the sea, or upon any tree. And I saw another angel ascend from the sunrising, having the seal of the living God : and he cried with a great voice to the four angels to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we shall have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads."

(1) In the preceding visions, and especially in the sixth, we are led to contemplate the earth as such a scene of war, of famine, of pestilence, of earthquakes, of commotions, of every form of devastation and destruction, that one might infer that possibly all men may perish, or that no complete kingdom of Christ should ever be. Here we are assured that all is safe, and

that the earth and its inhabitants cannot be so injured as to prevent the gathering of the full complement of the redeemed. Here we might treat at large of a vastly important principle thus clearly indicated, that the whole course of Divine Providence is directed in order to the development of the higher work of Redemption, that the very preservation of the earth is subordinated to the salvation of mankind, and that, unless for the gathering in of the family of God in the next world, the family of man would not, or at least might not, be maintained in this. The mighty destructive agencies are restrained from their tremendous work, that the servants of God may be sealed,—protected on earth and prepared for heaven. The winds here are evidently regarded as irresistibly destructive. As the four corners of the earth suggest the whole earth, the four winds suggest all the winds. Of course these winds are not to be taken literally, but figuratively, of all the mighty physical agencies to which we have referred. Under control of these angelic beings, they are to be viewed as acting by no chance, but in harmony with the designs and purposes of Him “who worketh all in all.”

(2) Who or what are we to understand by this other angel, who ascends from the east, and who has the seal of the living God? Some suppose Christ Himself; others, a created angel. The former regard the Holy Spirit as the seal, and therefore infer that the angel from the sunrising can be no other than He who is so beautifully called “The Day-spring from on high.” The correct idea seems to embrace both views, and that most consistently. The seal is symbolical; and therefore the sealing is purely external on the forehead. Angel, seal, and sealing may thus be viewed as representing Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit’s whole work of restoring believers in Christ to the perfect image of God. We know of hardly any more fertile source of error in the interpretation of this Book, than that of regarding what is the result of a long process or long course of action as the immediate or direct result of some one action or work. Thus here the symbolic sealing may be most naturally viewed as one single act—that of putting a mark on the forehead; but the true sealing intended by it, or rather the real work described as a sealing, which is itself figurative, may be such a process of spiritual renewal and transformation as may be carried on to the close of the believer’s life. This we understand to have been meant here. We have regarded the Holy Spirit as the seal; and in a very high sense He is. However, as the seal, whether

symbolical or real and spiritual, was evidently intended to be visible, we take the seal to be that work of the Holy Spirit which issues in the ever-growing likeness of God and the Lamb; which becomes more and more visible externally; so that, in chap. xiv. 1, these sealed ones are described as having the name of the Lamb and His Father's name on their foreheads, as every son may be said to have among men, when his likeness to his father becomes so marked that the father's name may be said to be written on his brow, or that the father may be seen in the face of the son.

No doubt we have in this vision a reference to the vision of Ezekiel, as given in chapters viii. and ix., in which we are told that he was brought "in the visions of God" to the temple of Jerusalem, and was there made to see such sights as indicated the fearful corruption and heathenish practices of the nation, and was then led to behold "a man clothed in linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side," to whom "the Lord said, Go through the midst of the city . . . and set a mark on the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof." These as true Israelites, faithful servants and worshippers of Jehovah, were to be spared and protected, whilst the rest, as no true Israelites, but in heart and life heathen, were to be destroyed. So, in the case in hand, those sealed are undoubtedly the true Israel of God among the merely nominal Israel or professing but unreal Church of Jesus Christ. We have here an embodiment of the principle, "They are not all Israel who are of Israel." The sealed may belong to every age from Christ to the triumph of the Gospel; but they will be specially marked out for Divine protection, like those in Ezekiel, in times of the greatest corruption of the nominal Israel of God or Church of Jesus Christ.

However, we must not draw too full or too close a resemblance between the visions of Ezekiel and of John. The former pertained to a time of greatest corruption. The latter, we think, relates to the work of the Spirit throughout at least the whole pre-millennial period. The one specially points to the safety of the faithful worshippers of Jehovah amidst the judgments about to fall upon the entire nation. The other points, not only to such safety amidst the persecutions of the heathen world and like persecutions of the corrupt Christian Church, but also to the whole work of the Holy Spirit in perfecting the character of the followers of Jesus and servants of God, and preparing them

for service in time and for the blessedness of eternity. All this will appear as we go on. Of course the same sealing work must go on to the end of time. However, there is such a special reference here to "the great tribulation" out of which these sealed ones are said to come, as seems implied in next vision; and also, as already said, to that protection which these sealed ones need, but which will not be needed by those sealed in the time of universal Christian prosperity. We can by no means agree with Alford in regarding this sealing work as relating to "those elect of God who shall be living on earth at the time here indicated—viz. that of the coming of the Lord." Nor can we at all agree with Hengstenberg, that this whole scene represents "what is to take place before the accomplishment of that which is announced in the opening of the sixth seal." We hold, as already said, that this vision runs through the whole period from Christ to the millennium, during which "the first-fruits," as these sealed ones are called, are gathered, and after which will follow the true and glorious harvest, the long millennial period of the universal triumph of the Gospel and prosperity of the Christian Church.

We need hardly say, that far less do we agree with Elliott in treating this as a vision of a mere period of Roman history—that after the union of Church and State under Constantine the Great, when such a mighty influx of mere nominal Christians into the former took place. No doubt this time is included. Elliott has certainly not a few striking and useful remarks with regard to it; indicating the corruption which then set in, the increased perversion of the ordinance of baptism, in which the external sign was taken for the real seal of the Holy Spirit, the growing neglect of the study of the word of God preparing the way for what was "essential to the successful establishment of the Apostasy, *the supercession of the written word*," the exaltation of "unwritten tradition as a standard of authority." Referring to the sealing work, he goes on to say,—“a figuration depicting all this could surely signify no other doctrinal truth but that of the Lord's sovereign grace, Himself choosing, enlightening, and quickening His true servants (contradistinctively to any mere outward Christianisation by baptism or profession), and protecting and preserving them to the end.” We have no doubt that the sealed ones would maintain all the essential doctrines of Divine and saving grace; but we do not think this was specially meant, or that this definite period was at all specially intended.

Here, Vitringa, with all his learning and judgment, appears to err in holding the vision to point to a great and open confession of true doctrine; such confession being like a sign which those who make it may be said to have on their foreheads, or openly to carry before them. Far better than any such verbal confession which even mere nominal Christians may most correctly as well as openly make, is the living and evidently new-created likeness to God and the Lamb, which chap. xiv. 1 appears clearly to prove to be here intended, and which, when truly developed, becomes visible through the life and conduct of every Christian. In harmony with this, Lange has well said, "Is not the *sealing* the impressing upon believers the *name*, *i.e.* the image, of God the Father and the Son (chap. xiv. 1), or in other words, is it not their *sanctification*? . . . with the manifold misapprehension of the sealing, a non-appreciation of the universal import of this section is connected." He then speaks of the reference of the sealing "to the entire duration of the Christian Church, until its final consummation, and to the entire duration of the world, to its final destruction." True, the sealing of the Spirit will continue to the end of time. Here, however, a definite period is referred to—that up to the triumph of the Gospel.

2. *Vers.* 4-8. "And I heard the number of them which were sealed, a hundred and forty and four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the Children of Israel. Of the tribe of Judah (were) sealed twelve thousand: of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand: of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand: of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand: of the tribe of Naphthali twelve thousand: of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand: of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand; of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand: of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand: of the tribe of Zebulon twelve thousand: of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand: of the tribe of Benjamin (were) sealed twelve thousand."

(1) John merely heard the number of the sealed. He did not witness the process. The number, 144,000, was the chief thing here to be observed by him,—12,000 out of each of the tribes of Israel. That the numbers are to be taken figuratively and not literally is evident, because the entire sum is so very small that, taken literally, it would prove the work of the Crowned Conqueror, or the work of preaching the Gospel, to have been all but a total failure, and because we cannot suppose that there would be precisely the same number sealed in each of the twelve tribes, whether we take these to be tribes of Israel literally or view them

as making up the merely nominal Christian Church. As some very stoutly maintain that literal Israel is here meant, we may deal at once with the question. And that the professing Christian Church is meant we think most certain, for the following reasons :—

a. The writers of the New Testament had used, and Christians had long become familiar with the use of the name of Israel for the Christian Church,—“the whole Israel of God.”

b. The separation of Jewish from Gentile Christians had never been maintained from the time when the door had been opened in the case of Cornelius and his household, with the exception of certain temporary differences as to circumcision and the like :—“There is neither Jew nor Greek, etc., but all are one in Christ.”

c. Throughout this Book Christians are always called by the name of Israel, never by the name of Christians, and that as if Jerusalem were still their chief city, and as if the City and Temple were still occupied and used by them. The distinction drawn between Israel and the Gentiles is simply that between the true Israel of God and merely nominal Israel, just that between real and merely nominal Christians. This is the case to the end of the Book ;—the New Jerusalem being a name due to the fact of Christians continuing to be called Israelites ; and further the names of the twelve tribes on the twelve gates of the Holy City implying that the City belonged exclusively to Christian Israel, and that, in the way of symbol, each tribe had a gate with perfect right of entrance or of egress. Hence,

d. The argument, which some have urged in behalf of literal Israel, on the ground of the use of the very names of the tribes, goes for nothing when we thus find the very same names written on the gates, not of the literal, but of the new and spiritual Jerusalem. Here, then, Israel may as well symbolise the whole nominal Christian Church, as actually does the Israel of the New Jerusalem exclusively the true people of Christ.

e. Of as little weight is the argument, that in this same chapter there seems to be a contrast drawn between the sealed of the Jewish nation and the saved of all other nations. There is no such distinction drawn. The “all nations” include the Jewish nation. This is true whether we identify the sealed of the one vision with the saved of the other, or not.

f. In chap. xiv. 1-5 we are expressly told that the 144,000

sealed ones, or with the name of the Lamb and the name of His Father written on their foreheads, or those in heaven represented by them, "were purchased from among men," not from among literal Israel, (to be) "the firstfruits unto God and unto the Lamb." In this Book we seem to have no express reference to the Old Testament Church viewed individually. It seems to be no part of the Apocalypse to cast any new light on the final state of Old Testament saints. Representatively, they seem to be set forth along with New Testament saints, under the four and twenty elders, twelve of the one class and twelve of the other. They seem also collectively set forth under the sublime figure of the woman in heaven with the crown of twelve stars, the mother of the male child who rules the nations with a rod of iron, that is, the nations or Gentiles, or, in fact, all but true Israelites, all who remain outside the fold of the true Israel of God.

g. In the ninth chapter the sealing process or work is so alluded to as to prove that it was carried on to at least a number of centuries after the time of Christ; and could not therefore by any possibility be the sealing of distinctively Jewish Christians alone. There it is said that the locusts "should not hurt the grass of the earth . . . but only such men as have not the seal of God on their foreheads." The same sealed Israelites are thus referred to, and therefore most assuredly true Christians of whatever nation.

h. We might point to the fact, that the Israel here spoken of became so corrupt as to be called by the name of Gentiles or heathen, to whom, we are told, in chap xi. 2, the court of the Temple was to be given; that, as Gentiles or heathen, they should tread the Holy City under foot forty-and-two months. This certainly does not refer to the literal Israel.

i. We may just repeat, what we have indicated, that, if we take the sealed ones for literal Israelites, we overlook or set aside the uniformity of the language and symbolism of the entire Book, where all true Christians are true Israelites and all corrupt or unreal Christians are simply men of the earth or Gentiles. And hence Jesus rules the nations, the Gentiles, all but true Israelites, with a rod of iron; whilst He raises true Israelites, sincere Christians, into partnership with Himself, constituting them a kingdom of priests, even making them share with Him in this very rule of iron over those who reject Himself, and who are thus treated as the nations of the earth, the Gentiles, the heathen. This uniformity is carried down, not only to the

millennial period, but also to the blessedness and glory of the Heavenly Jerusalem and of the eternal world.

(2) We may here simply note the fact, that the tribe of Dan is passed over, and that of Ephraim, under the name of Joseph, introduced in its stead. This was assuredly due to no oversight or error of the inspired writer. Dan seems to have been greatly lost. Ephraim or Joseph had occupied a high place in the national history. This alteration, on the supposition of natural Israel, might look like a serious mistake in the eyes of many; but, on the supposition of spiritual Israel or Israel viewed figuratively, it would seem intentional and significant. In spiritual or Christian Israel, there are of course no separate tribes at all. The representation is purely allusive, expressive of the entire Israel of God. All being symbol, it was perfectly right to represent the numbers sealed as the same in all the tribes.

(3) We would not dogmatise as to the reason for the use of the number one hundred and forty-four thousand. Doubtless it is purely symbolic; and we think it must have had its basis in the number of the tribes of ancient Israel. We have twelve thousand multiplied by twelve. The true Israel representing the whole true Church of Christ, the number of the sealed ones would symbolise the whole number of true Christians, and therefore, however comparatively small, may most fully represent a vast multitude—in fact, “the great multitude which no man could number,” of the next vision. The sealed are to be viewed as on earth, and the great multitude as in heaven. Under two aspects, accordingly, the two visions may symbolise or represent one and the same countless class of the redeemed or the “purchased from among men.” That the vast disparity between the numbers is no argument against this, may be easily seen, if we consider the most striking cases in this Book of the use of comparatively small objects to symbolise immensely great ones, and very small numbers to represent very large ones. We may point to only one example as seen in the case of the seven candlesticks denoting all the candlesticks, or seven Churches representing the immense number of Churches of Christ on earth. So the numbers twelve, twelve thousand, one hundred and forty-four thousand, may be viewed as expressive of completeness, or of the Church in all the vast multitude of its members.

(4) We have already alluded to a very important question—Do these symbolically sealed ones represent Christians of any one special period, or, do they belong to many ages of the Christian

Church? If the latter, these ages must be limited and not extended to the whole Christian period, as we think the reference to "firstfruits," chap. xiv. 1-5, clearly implies. The fact that these sealed ones appear more than once, and at different points of the prophetic history, excludes the idea of only one definite period. Only a correct interpretation of chap. xiv. 1-5, just referred to, can enable us to perceive the intended relation between the two visions of this chapter, or at least to come to any satisfactory conclusion as to whether the great multitude should be viewed as identical with the sealed ones, and whether that multitude should be taken to represent the entire and final sum of the redeemed or only those gathered out of all nations up to the time of the triumph of Christ over His greatest foe, called the beast, whose deadly force is to be so long and too successfully directed against the saints of God. Still, that foe cannot triumph. The firstfruits must be gathered in, and he must fall and perish for ever. "These firstfruits" would embrace the few in apostolic days and the few or the great number of each successive period.

All are spoken of as one whole. Every sealed one belongs to the hundred and forty-four thousand, as, in the case of a regiment which forms a part of an army for ages, and which might have the name of "The Thousand" or of any other number. Every soldier of every generation would be said to belong to "The Thousand." That regiment might sometimes be sadly reduced and sometimes largely increased; and throughout the whole term of its existence, be made up of many a thousand. The one numerical name would be used from first to last. Few or many, it would ever be called by the name of "The Thousand." In like manner, the hundred and forty-four thousand may be regarded as the name of the true Church on earth,—The Hundred and forty-four thousand; and all who are sealed, it may be through many ages, will be said to belong to The Hundred and forty-four thousand; and, as the number is symbolic, it is quite sufficiently large to embrace the largest number of true Christians at any one time on earth, or even, as we believe it does, to embrace the whole countless number of these, when all have been gathered together in heaven as represented in the wonderful vision which follows. Such we understand the nature and extent of this sealing work to be; and, as we have already said, the two visions of this chapter are to be regarded as referring to one and the same vast number of the redeemed, set forth, on the one hand, as

sealed from age to age on earth, and on the other, as all fully redeemed and in the presence of God and the Lamb in heaven. This, we think, will appear as we go on to treat of the next vision.

3. *Vers. 9, 10.* "After these things I saw, and behold, a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation and of all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands: and they cry with a great voice, saying, Salvation unto our God, which sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb."

(1) The vision of the fifth 'seal we found to set forth what had been going on while the Rider on the white horse had been achieving victory after victory. As He conquered human hearts and made men new creatures, He roused the enmity of men, which led to vast opposition and to many a martyrdom for the sake of the truth. From such opposition and martyrdom we can infer the success of the victorious Rider. His victories are not expressly set forth. Through the very opposition and martyrdom referred to, they would appear far less extensive than they really were. They are virtually disclosed in the vision of sealing just considered; the sealed ones or the great multitude being "the firstfruits" of final and glorious conquest. In this way, in Daniel to some extent, and in the Apocalypse to a greater extent still, one vision is made to supply the necessary incompleteness of another, or of other and preceding visions. All are needed to convey a full idea of the many-sided object delineated. As yet we have no representation of saints in heaven, unless in their representative elders. In the first chapter we have the saints on earth introduced as virtually singing what we may safely call the song of redemption, the song which none but the truly sealed ones can sing—"Unto Him that loveth us," etc. In the fifth chapter we have the same song sung, not personally by them, but rather prospectively and prophetically of them,—“Worthy art Thou . . . for Thou wast slain and didst purchase unto God with Thy blood (men) of every tribe and tongue,” etc. Now, for the first time, we are made to see a countless number of saints in heaven, the veil, as it were, withdrawn, and all personally singing the same glorious song of redemption, “Salvation unto our God . . . and unto the Lamb.” In this way we see the grand and certain result of the spiritual warfare of the great Captain. He Himself conquered when slain by His foes. His soldiers conquer when they are slain by theirs. They overcome, because “they

love not their lives even unto death." As they disappear, in whatever manner, from among men, they appear among the sanctified and glorified in heaven. For long periods the saints on earth may seem not to increase—nay, even to decrease; but the saints in heaven ever increase, never decrease. Once within the veil, they no more go out.

Here they are said to have become a vast, a countless multitude. The description is sufficient to set forth the whole glorious and numberless assembly of the finally and eternally redeemed. But, long ago, we may rest assured, the Lamb has gathered around Him a mighty throng, which might well be described, as here, as "*A multitude which no man could number.*" In our day, after so many triumphs of the Crowned Conqueror, we may, in our contemplation of the heavenly state, rejoice in the thought of such a multitude being actually redeemed from sin, from death, from all evil, and actually engaged in the pure and perfect, in the grateful and loving service of God and the Lamb. Jesus expressly told His disciples that He was going to prepare a place for them, and that He would come again to receive them to Himself, that where He was they might be also. He has provided the place; and He has been coming ever since and receiving them; and now, who can number even those who are already with Him and destined to be with Him for ever and ever?

Here we have a picture of heaven, whether we view the multitude as made up of those sealed during the pre-millennial period and called simply "firstfruits," or regard that multitude as embracing not only those "firstfruits," but also the vastly mightier number of the whole millennial harvest. Let us, then, make all designed use of this most wonderful vision in all our contemplations of the final and eternal state of the redeemed. If we find anything so stated as to lead us to confine the vision to the multitude of the pre-millennial saints, we can still feel assured that what is here said of these is sufficiently glorious to represent all the blessedness of all the redeemed without exception from the beginning to the end of time. Practically, therefore, it is of no real consequence whether we suppose a reference to one vast portion of the inconceivably mighty whole, or to that mighty whole itself. If we find sufficient reasons for coming to any pretty certain conclusion, the chief advantage will be that we shall thus possess a clearer and better view of the right interpretation of this wonderful Book.

(2) These saints are said to be gathered from "*every nation, and of all tribes,*" etc. This might, if taken very literally of all nations without exception, be deemed sufficient to prove that the entire sum of the redeemed must be meant. However, this would be to make greatly more of the words than they at all necessarily mean. Thus, almost as strongly, are words used of those dwelling at Jerusalem on the great Day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 5): "Now, there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven." We cannot therefore press the words into the service of either view of this vision. The main idea is, that the great salvation is for all peoples, for man as man, or for no one nation, not for the Jew as a Jew. This gives us a most excellent conception of the Christian and apostolic view of the great redemption. Christ was a Jew, and yet not a Jew. He was a man, a son of man, representative of no mere class of men, but of all mankind or of perfect humanity itself. His religion was for the whole race of men. This chapter gloriously illustrates this infinitely precious fact. In the whole compass of human literature we can find nothing to be compared to this vision of the unseen and eternal world. No mind can adequately conceive the influence which this one Divine picture has already, during these many ages, exerted over the minds and hearts and spirits of the greatest, wisest and best of human beings, or over those of the most deeply suffering and sorrowful, dejected and desponding of mankind. Nor shall that influence ever cease, till all the faithful are made actual partakers of all the blessedness and glory which it unveils.

(3) The multitude is represented as "*standing before the throne and before the Lamb.*" This seems clearly to imply that they are actually in heaven. We find expressions which would at first sight appear to imply this, such as "dwellers in heaven," but are really descriptive of Christians still on earth; but here the words can refer to nothing short of heaven itself, even of the final state of the redeemed. Life is ended; immortality is begun. They enjoy the presence of God and of the Lamb. We must not, however, allow this picture to lay hold of our imaginations and hearts as if it were meant of actual fact. In spirit and essence all is perfectly real and true. We do not suppose it possible for any picture of heaven to be suggestive of more of the realities of heaven than the one before us. These might be set forth in a great variety of ways; but, if they were, we feel assured they would fail so to affect the whole personal, social and spiritual

nature of man. Besides, the picture lives and breathes. It breathes the very spirit of heaven. "Standing before the throne," they are in the presence of the great God and King.

The heavenly regions may be of measureless extent. Many of this saintly multitude may be dispersed over them, and at remote distances; yet they all stand before God and before His throne. He may be literally the invisible God; and yet they all behold the face of their Father. They see Him everywhere and in everything. They see Him in one another. They see Him in the face of the Lamb. Their own Divine nature, originally intended for the intuitional vision of God, now renewed, elevated, perfected in love and purity, enables them, as Christ has said, to see God. Oh, how much is implied in this one simple expression, "standing before the throne"! They see the throne as well as Him who sitteth upon it. They everywhere and at all times behold it. In this vision it naturally appears as if materialised and localised. But no matter was ever created fit to form a throne for the Infinite Spirit. Nor is there a single place through all the heavenly world where that throne is not, or where to the pure and saintly eye it may not be seen. All see the rule of God; all have His laws written upon their hearts. All see all as fellow-subjects of the one great universal and eternal kingdom of God. Their own hearts are thrones, exalted thrones, at once glorious and gracious thrones, self-conscious thrones "of God and of the Lamb." For they stand also "*before the Lamb.*" They are of course represented as in the attitude of praise. They behold the Lamb. They see Him on the right hand of the Majesty on high. They see Him in the midst of the throne. They see Him on the throne as if in very deed the throne were His own. They see His throne, and they see Himself everywhere, always with them, never for a moment absent or distant. He leads them, He feeds them. He rules them, He rules over all, His kingdom is universal. In seeing all this, and vastly more, they everywhere and always see His throne and see Himself. Serving God and the Lamb day and night, doing that will which is the one law of all heaven, they ever act as sons and subjects, and their ceaseless submission and obedient activity, wherever they are, keeps them in the presence of God and the Lamb, and as if continually before the throne.

(4) "*Arrayed in white robes*": expressive of perfect purity, and therefore of perfect salvation. Such robes, indeed, may be worn by saints on earth, though not absolutely perfect, but as

perfectly forgiven through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and as truly sanctified and made righteous, however they may be like Paul, "not already made perfect." Here the robes are perfectly pure, the character perfectly complete, and salvation perfectly enjoyed.

(5) "*And palms in their hands*": emblems of victory over all sin, all sorrow, all evil, through the blood and spirit of the Lamb; or symbolic of festivity and perfect blessedness, as palms were used during the festivals; or badges of loyalty and praise, as those used when Jesus, as King of Israel, entered the city of Jerusalem. Some have well supposed an allusion to the feast of tabernacles, and the joy of ending the earthly pilgrimage, of having passed through the wilderness of this world, and of having reached the heavenly Canaan.

(6) "*And they cry with a great voice, saying, Salvation unto our God which sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb.*" This great voice is expressive of their whole heart, with all the intensity and energy of their renewed and immortal nature. It is expressive of their entire heavenly existence. Their whole redeemed, glorified, and deathless being may be said eternally to utter this mighty cry. All gratitude, all love, all praise, they express to God and to the Lamb. They take no praise to themselves. They give no praise to any created being. The praise of the whole and eternal salvation, they give solely to God and the Lamb. They praise God for giving the Lamb; and they praise the Lamb for giving Himself for their salvation. Doubtless all this is inclusive of praise to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Father and Son, without whose grace, from first to last, they never could have reached this height of eternal blessedness.

4. *Vers. 11, 12.* "And all the angels were standing round about the throne, and the four and twenty elders and the four living creatures; and they fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, (be) unto our God for ever and ever. Amen."

All angels, all holy and unfallen beings, who have ever lived in the love and to the glory of the great Creator, are here represented as uniting in the mighty joy of the redeemed, and we may say, of the Redeemer and Redeeming God. They fall on their faces in perfect and profound acquiescence in the great and glorious work of salvation celebrated by the countless multitude, to whose great cry they say, Amen. In this glad and great

Amen, we may perceive the perfect harmony of the unfallen and the redeemed; all being made for ever one in God and to God, through Jesus Christ. A great multitude of the prodigal human race has returned to the home and bosom of their God and Father; and who can measure the joy thus arising in the presence of these angels of light? In the contemplation of this glorious sight we may well be lost in wonder, whilst we often join in the one great cry and in the one deep Amen. These angels, we are told, "desire to look" into the things of human redemption; and now they behold the glory of the great Creator in this new and most wonderful creation thus presented to their view. In it they see the most glorious perfections of the Infinite God grandly revealed. The very heart of God, the boundless love of the Father, they see as if unveiled before their eyes. All possible goodness and excellence they ascribe to Him. In the great salvation, as well as in the great creation, they behold the wisdom and power of God. Thanksgiving peculiarly belongs to the saved; but these pure and loving spirits rejoice in the blessedness of the children of the common Father of all, "lost, but now found, dead, but now alive again." In this "innumerable company of angels" there is not so much as one "elder brother" to look coldly on, or to refuse for a single moment to join in this joyous and heavenly festival.

5. *Vers. 13, 14.* "And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, These which are arrayed in white robes, who are they, and whence came they? And I say unto him, My lord, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

(1) This question of the elder was evidently designed to prepare the mind of John for the reception of the truth. The scene was most wonderful. John's brief reply, "My lord, thou knowest," seems clearly to imply a confession of ignorance and a request to be informed. The elder, whom we have viewed as one of the inspired and prophetic representatives of the Israel of both the Old Testament and the New, makes the desired disclosure,—*"These are they which come out of the great tribulation,"* etc. According to the text of the Revised Version, they are thus said to come, and not to have come. Some would therefore regard them as still coming, as if the countless number alluded to was yet incomplete. The mere expression might imply this. However, this, like other visions, appears decidedly

to be in itself complete, or to convey the idea of what is to be regarded as complete.

Here Alford has well and with great exactness remarked, "Not as E.V., 'that came'; nor again must the present be put prominently forward, that *are coming*, as if the number were not yet complete: still less is it to be taken as a quasi-future, that *shall come* (cf. ἔπλυναν and ἐλεύκαναν below); but as in the expression ὁ ἐρχόμενος, the present is merely one of *designation*. Their description, generally, is, that they 'come,' etc." This seems quite correct. In a similar way, a man says, "I come from such a place," though he may have come many years before. So we may speak of the western nations as all coming from the east. The whole multitude is here viewed as a great class thus coming out of the great tribulation. This is very much to be preferred to the view of Murphy—"that come, that are coming all along the ages from Adam down." In fact, the descriptive name gives a clear answer to the question, "Whence came they?"—"They come out of the great tribulation."

(2) "*Out of the great tribulation*,"—not simply, "out of great tribulation," but, as Alford puts it, "out of the tribulation, the great one"; as if pointing to some one definite tribulation, and that seemingly well known or at least so revealed that it ought to be known. Yet various opinions are held with respect to it. The expression might mean, as some believe it does, the whole vast sum of the troubles and trials, sufferings and sorrows, the tremendous evils of every kind, in which mankind are involved from age to age, of which sin is at once the common origin and the most terrible part. Thus Murphy: "*The great tribulation*, which sin has brought into the world." This would certainly be true of all the redeemed: they all come out of this sum of all tribulations, greater or smaller. In this sense the words would naturally lead us to infer, that this vision was one of the entire saved from first to last, and not of those only who are to be identified with the sealed ones who are expressly called "firstfruits." In this case we must regard the vision as co-extensive with what we have regarded as prophetic or anticipative of the full and final result of the redemptive work (chap. v. 9, 10): "Thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with Thy blood (men) of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and madest them (to be) unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon the earth,"—words which would carry the eye down the stream of time and set before us the

redeemed of all ages, yet viewed as seen only on this side of the veil; whilst this vision would be regarded as simply withdrawing that veil and thus enabling us to behold the same redeemed ones in the enjoyment of all the perfected character and blessedness of heaven. As already said, the wonderful picture is quite sufficient to set forth all this; and we may contemplate it as thus fitted to lead us to anticipate the great and final gathering. This we certainly may do, even though we may think that we have solely the vastly smaller gathering of the "firstfruits,"—of the sealed ones,—or of the whole company of departed saints during the pre-millennial ages.

We have no reason for supposing some great time of trial and suffering immediately before the coming of the Lord or specially marking any one period. It must have extended over the whole of the time during which the entire multitude was gathered in. We may quote the following from Hengstenburg:—"It may be asked, what are we to understand by 'the great tribulation'? According to Bengel, it must indicate generally the troubles of human life. . . . But this exposition seeks in vain for support from ver. 16; the distresses mentioned there are not those generally of this life, but those of the wilderness. But what disproves it is, that by it the starting point, the fainting of believers in prospect of the judgments which were going to be inflicted on the world, is overlooked, and so the connection is destroyed between vers. 9—17 and vers. 1—8. The same reason is also decisive against those who would understand by the great tribulation the persecution of Christians. The consolation for these Christians, who sighed under the persecutions of the world, has been given earlier, and finds its completion in chap. viii. 1. It lies in the contents of the seventh seal. The definite article alone, which implies the distress to be known from the preceding contest, leads to the conclusion, that by the great tribulation the plagues of the world are to be understood, which bring with them troubles also for the elect. To the same result we are also led by the original passage, Matt. xxiv. 21, 'For there shall then be *great tribulation*, such as has not been from the beginning of the world till now, nor shall be.' The subject of discourse there, too, is the judgments to be brought on the world, which necessarily involve the elect in sufferings along with others. Finally, this explanation is confirmed by comparing chap. iii. 10, where the hour of temptation is spoken of which shall come upon the whole world, to tempt those who dwell on

the earth. The subject of discourse there cannot be persecution, for the temptation appears as a future one, while the persecution raged at that very time. But here we can the less think of persecution, as there is not a syllable found in regard to what in that case would have been of such vast moment—fidelity and steadfastness—only the general marks of believers are given.”

All this is strongly put; still we cannot regard this view as at all correct; and that for these reasons: *First*, this multitude most assuredly embraces all Christians from the time of Christ; and therefore the tribulation out of which they came cannot be identified with any “temptation,” however great, which came to pass long after that time. *Secondly*, that temptation not running through the whole period of gathering, cannot embrace the whole tribulation referred to. *Thirdly*, that temptation was to come on the world to try or tempt the men of the world, “the dwellers on the earth,” as they are called, and not on the Church, however the Church might have to share in the common evil. The very design of the sealing embraced that of security against at least the full effect of such a mighty trial. But the very words to which Hengstenburg appeals completely demolish his theory (Rev. iii. 10), “Because thou didst keep the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial (or temptation), that hour which is to come on the whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.” These faithful ones cannot, then, be among those who came out of the great tribulation, if it is to be identified with that which these and, we may add, all like faithful ones, are expressly said to escape. Nor can it be identified with that of Matt. xxiv. 21, which, however great, is a most fearful tribulation, whose continuance would prove fatal to the very elect, and therefore cannot possibly be that out of which the whole multitude comes; though it and many another one may be included in it.

Elliott falls into a like mistake of supposing that what was only a part was really the entire tribulation: “This appellation, ‘the great,’ appears to be a term of comparison with some other previous and lesser tribulation; and that it is explained as simply as satisfactorily by the prophetic announcement, to the souls under the altar, that they should wait ‘until their brethren, that were to be slain even as they, should be completed’; seeing that these words implied a *second term of tribulation*, as well as a second body of martyrs, to succeed after that of the persecutions of Pagan Rome.” This would imply that only those, who came

out of this second persecution, formed the great multitude. Certainly those who endured the first persecution were as truly included as those who endured the second. Both persecutions, and vastly more, formed the great tribulation. The conclusion, therefore, to which we are thus led is either—*first*, that the reference is to the sum of all the evils of the world, all sin and all the results of sin included, together with the special afflictions or tribulations to which the followers of Christ are exposed; or, *secondly*, that the reference is to all these throughout the more limited period of more or less conflict, and more or less persecution, ending in the triumph of Christ in the conversion of the world. Much might be said in favour of the former. However, as already hinted, we think the right interpretation of chap. xiv. 1—5, along with a few pretty decisive arguments, will be found to prove that the latter or more limited reference is very greatly to be preferred. As the point in question is of importance in its relation to this whole vision, we shall deal more fully with it afterwards.

(3) “*And they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*” They were no mere sufferers, however great. Too many seem to regard the happiness of heaven as a kind of compensation for the poverty, the distresses, the unhappiness of this world. These were saints as well as sufferers; and sufferers to no small extent because they were saints, or because they were true followers of the Lamb, in whose infinitely precious and mysteriously sin-cleansing blood they are here said to have washed their robes and made them white. Most fearfully had these robes been stained and defiled. As the evangelical prophet says of ancient Israel, we may say of these,—“They were all as one that is unclean, and all their righteousnesses were as a polluted garment.” Elsewhere these same glorified ones are said to have been “loosed” or redeemed “from their sins by” this same blood; also to have been themselves purchased unto God with this blood, out of every nation and tribe. The idea so tenderly expressed by Christ Himself, that He came to “give His life a ransom for many,” is thus clearly implied. As a great sacrifice for sin, that sacred life was laid down and that precious blood shed. Never can this idea be eliminated from the sacred volume. Any volume which contained it not would fail to prove itself sacred or to be sufficient to meet the moral and spiritual, nay, the deepest and most awful, wants of mankind.

Here the idea of the cleansing, purifying, sanctifying power of

the blood of Christ is more prominently, though not exclusively, intended. And what an idea we have ! Whilst millions of the purest and best of mankind have known experimentally and with absolute certainty this mysterious and most marvellous cleansing power, so that there can be no rational doubt as to its reality ; how strange that any such robes, once all polluted, should by any possibility be washed in any blood so as to become, and to remain for ever, absolutely stainless, perfectly white ! Ah ! who knows what is meant by the one little word, sin ? who can measure what it has done in this our world ? who can express the evil which it has brought upon himself ? Yet, who has not fondled it as a friend from whom he cannot find it in his heart to separate ? How few have really found out that, instead of a friend, it is the most awful, the most delusive, and the most deadly foe which he has or can possibly have ? Only in the light of the Cross can "the exceeding sinfulness of sin" be clearly seen. Only when one has tried and tried again to trample it under foot, and been as often overcome, and so led to groan, as if in awful despair, "O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death ?" can he know its terrible power. And so only those who have often washed in this "fountain opened for sin and uncleanness," can know the awful pollution of sin.

Every sin is a stain on the garment of the sinner. When he receives the blessed Saviour, he receives full forgiveness, he begins a new life, he appears, as it were, in a new dress, and he seeks to be henceforth unspotted from the world, within and without ; and now, as in the case of the sinner or of himself before he believed, every sin is a stain on his garments. All sins, in thought or word or deed, are stains, the smallest as well as the greatest. Over and over again has he to apply to the open fountain. As he confesses and asks forgiveness for the sake of Christ, for the sake of the great Sacrifice, he receives that forgiveness, the stains are removed, and, in the words before us, he "washes his robes and makes them white in the blood of the Lamb." All the while that he thus washes away the actual stain, he is mindful of the infinite love of the Lamb, and he bathes in it. His whole heart is influenced by it. He becomes more grateful and loving. His heart becomes more and more pure. The sacrificial blood of the Lamb, and the self-sacrificing love of the Lamb, in this way combine to remove actual sin from the garment and remaining sinfulness from the heart. The

sinning is daily; and the washing must be daily too. The cleansing process may seem amazingly slow, and sometimes as utterly unreal. Many a sigh and many a tear and many a prayer does it cost. The sorrows and sufferings connected with this very process might well be called by the name of the Great Tribulation; and we might well almost identify the two, the coming out of it and the work of washing away sin. In fact, we might call our sinfulness and our sins our great tribulation, and our coming out of it our washing our robes and making them white in the blood of the Lamb. We do not mean that this alone is what is here intended. We mean to say, that the Christian's own sins and sinfulness form at least no small portion, in most cases the very largest portion, of that which is worthy of the name, the Great Tribulation.

These saints are themselves said to wash their robes; and they most certainly do so. None but themselves can repent of their sins, or, through "the blood of the Lamb," ask and receive it. None but themselves can breathe that spirit of gratitude and love to Jesus which enables them to deny themselves in the future and so crucify remaining sinfulness. None but themselves can exercise that simple and sincere faith in the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," which has of itself the most wonderful power, not only to justify before God, but also and at the same moment to sanctify the heart; and none but themselves can persevere in the growing exercise of that faith, till the whole heart is full of the love of Christ and of God, till the whole man is brought into true and willing subjection to the will of God, till salvation from all sinfulness as well as from all sins is complete, till no new sin shall add a new stain, and till they have finally and for ever "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." All this, they and they only can do. But, if so, what then of the grace of the Holy Spirit? Is it not His part alone to sanctify and glorify as well as to regenerate? Must not He have all the glory of renewing from first to last and thus preparing for heaven, just as Christ must have all the glory of the great propitiation? Most assuredly He must: and yet they must do as we have said,—they and not He must wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb. Both are alike true. Whilst they must wash, He must so actuate them from first to last as to constrain and enable them, must so work in them to will and to do, must so thoroughly and unexceptionally lead them to do as they are here said to do, that the whole work not only may be,

but cannot but be, truly regarded as His. All the self-washed in the precious fountain will ascribe all the glory of the washing of self to the gracious and patient and unailing, the frequently resisted, quenched and grieved, Holy Spirit.

6. *Ver.* 15. "Therefore are they before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall spread His tabernacle over them."

(1) Here we have unspeakable Honour. "*They are before the throne.*" "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men." Here we have a far higher thought suggested,—Seest thou a man clothed in the beauties of holiness? he shall stand before God; he shall be made higher than the kings of the earth: he shall be a son and a servant of the Eternal Father and King; he shall ever be before the glorious high throne. "*Therefore:*" through deliverance from all sin, they rise to all blessedness and glory. Sin had separated them from God: union to Christ has now separated them from sin and thus reunited them to God and raised them to heaven. How they loved sin once! How they hate sin now! How they despised both God and the Lamb, when under the law of sin! How, now and through infinite grace, they give eternal glory to Father, Son and Holy Ghost for all the blessings of their complete salvation! "*They are before the throne.*" It is enough. They can rise no higher. There they behold the richest glory of God in the unveiled face of the Lamb.

(2) "*And they serve Him day and night in His temple.*" Here we have the most exalted and delightful service. Often they served on earth, amidst all the sins and sorrows, all the trials and temptations, all the wants and weaknesses of this mortal life. They longed to make some grateful and loving return for all the grace and goodness of God; yet ever felt that their services were most inadequate—that, at the very best, "they were unprofitable servants." Now, with glorified nature, with perfected hearts, with untiring strength, with spotless souls, in the very spirit and likeness of God and the Lamb, the holy children of the holy God, the ransomed from all evil by the blood and spirit of the Lamb, they are now faultless before the throne of God, and render to Him a pure and a perfect and a ceaseless service, faultless as themselves, now at last justly satisfactory to their own minds, and at once glorifying to the grace

of God and perfectly well-pleasing to God Himself. The whole multitude, like the few saintly ones of Sardis, now "walk with Christ in white: for they are" all now "worthy." They "serve day and night," without interruption and with never-failing strength. They find their true and perfect rest in the ceaseless and countless activities of love. Their services are said to be in the temple of God. According to what we have been contemplating all along, the sublime visions of this Book have had special reference to the Temple, with its outer and inner shrine, its Holy and its Most Holy Place; the outer or Holy representing the Church on earth, and the inner or Most Holy the Church in heaven. These white-robed palm-bearers are now within the inner and upper sanctuary. They enjoy perfect access to God. They carry on a perfected priestly service,—a service of all holy and loving activity, as we have said,—a service of adoration and praise, a service of melody in the heart and melody in the life,—a service of "harpers harping on their harps,"—a service of sweet music and of everlasting song.

(3) "*And He that sitteth on the throne shall spread His tabernacle over them.*" Here we have the richest and closest Divine communion, with absolute and eternal safety. The infinitely and the unchangeably loving Father puts his own tabernacle, His own dwelling-place, His own everlasting home, over these specially beloved, because most marvellously redeemed and recovered children. His tabernacle is just Himself. In Him they find their as well as His everlasting home. They are now in the very bosom of their Father and God. What joy now in the presence of the angels! "Jehovah, their God, is now in the midst of them: He rejoices over them with joy: He rests in His love: He rejoices over them with singing." And what shall we say of the mighty joy of Him who for this very "joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising shame," and, "now at the right hand of the throne," is in the very midst of His redeemed and glorified people! Assuredly their joys are now full. They can no longer say, "whom having not seen, we love." They now see and perfectly love. He now is seen; and they are perfectly "like Him: for they see Him as He is." Now, in highest sense, "they rejoice in Him with joy unspeakable and full of glory: having now received the end of their faith," the complete and eternal "salvation of their souls." Their joy in God and in the Lamb, and in all the family of God, no one, no power, can ever take from them.

7. *Vers.* 16, 17. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more : neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat : for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall be their Shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life ; and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes."

We shall not make so much as one analytical remark on the scene so wonderfully presented to the human mind, the truly Divine picture of infinite tenderness and love. It seems too sacred for any touch of ours. All heaven is here. The Poet of Scotland said he could not read the words without tears. Well might it attract and win many a heart to the "Good Shepherd" of heaven as well as of earth. Here it may be well often to ponder, and wonder, and, it may be, even to weep. If any do weep, their tears need not be the tears of weakness or want or distress ; nor will they be the tears which they will ask their God and Father "to wipe away."

8. We have, as already hinted, one question yet to consider,—Does this wondrous vision relate to the saints of all time, or to those specially of pre-millennial times ? From its position, and from various considerations, may we not conclude that the period referred to is that between the going forth of the one-crowned Conqueror and the coming forth of the same Conqueror having, in token of all the successes anticipated in the first vision, "upon His head many diadems" ? We seem led so to conclude for the following reasons :—

(1) The two visions of the seventh chapter appear to be closely connected with the visions of the six seals of the sixth chapter. They are introduced between the opening of the six seals and the opening of the seventh seal of the eighth chapter. In this way they seem to be supplementary to the preceding visions. They set before us just what we need in order to our having a more clear and comprehensive idea of the nature and result of the spiritual warfare of the great Conqueror. The vision of sealing tells us of the certain and gracious raising up and gathering in of the children of God, of followers of the Lamb bearing His image and that of His and their God and Father. Then the vision of the great multitude, or, as we are now endeavouring to show, of these same sealed ones after their departure from their earthly conflicts and manifold tribulation, sets before our minds the glorious issue of the spiritual warfare so long carried on. Throughout the many ages of persecution from the heathen world and the paganised Church, the Lamb has

always had the full complement of His redeemed, and when seen in vision at the close of the mighty strife gathered into their home beyond the veil, they are found to be a multitude that no man can number.

In this way, all the visions of the sixth and seventh chapters give to us a clear and most satisfactory light in relation to the whole pre-millennial period, when they are used in concert, not as visions of so many successive periods of time, as they have been too long and too often regarded, but as visions of so many phases or aspects of one and the same long period—a period yet by no means ended, with all its concurrent or contemporaneous agencies, operations and results, flowing on, as we have said, from the appearance of Christ as going forth, with His one crown, to conquer, to His next appearance, with His many diadems, tokens of that wide dominion which is the result of as many conquests. Between that first and second appearance the vision of the first seal has been practically and gloriously realised. Under the next three seals, we have set forth grand, but terrible, agencies, running on through the same period, all subordinate to the agency of the Conqueror, and all doing their awful, but needful, work, till that Conqueror has fully triumphed, when their fearful services are happily no more required; and accordingly, as we find, they never more appear. Whilst these diverse agencies are at work, the Church is opposed by the world, and suffers much during two special periods represented by the two consecutive classes of martyrs of the vision of the fifth seal.

Now, it is well to note that the close of this double period of depression is distinctly marked by the resurrection of the martyrs of the twentieth chapter, or, whatever the nature of that resurrection, by the triumph of the Church over the power of the beast, that is to say, over the persecuting power by which the second class of martyrs were to be slain. Thus, accordingly, the vision of the fifth seal brings us down to the same point as do the preceding four. As the vision of the sixth seal, whatever more, at least sets before us the judgment and the destruction of these persecuting powers, it carries us down to the close of the same pre-millennial time. These supplementary visions most admirably fit in with those just referred to in carrying our thoughts along the same line of prophetic revelation; and tell how the crowned Conqueror, or, under another form, the Lamb with His full complement of soldiers, the heaven-born army of the 144,000, went on from victory to victory, till, with an innumerable

multitude actually "led to glory," He takes His place on Mount Zion with the same sealed company, His true followers on earth, who, through the intervening ages, had ever proved faithful to Him even unto death. But, when does the Lamb thus appear? The time is clear. The beast, the second persecuting power, had been described in the thirteenth chapter, with his many followers having "the mark, even the name of the beast on their right hand, or upon their forehead." In contradistinction, the Lamb appears on Mount Zion with His full band of followers, the ever-faithful army of 144,000, with a very different mark, "the mark," even "His name, and the name of His Father, written on their foreheads." Our two visions, then, seem clearly to present to our view the same sealed company, as on earth and following the Lamb from age to age, down to the time above indicated, and as in heaven and fully redeemed and gathered into a countless multitude through the same period of time.

(2) The fact, that the great multitude is said to come out of the great tribulation, seems fully to harmonise with the idea of the two visions relating to the same persons, to the sealed as comprising the true followers of Christ amidst the trials and persecutions on earth, added of course to all the terrible evils of sin; and to the same sealed ones as raised out of these trials and temptations, to the enjoyment of the blessedness and glory of heaven. We have so treated of this tribulation already, that we shall here say little more concerning it. If the words had been "out of great tribulation," as the Authorised Version has it, our argument would have had less force. But when we find so great an emphasis expressed by those actually used, "out of *the* tribulation, *the* great one," we can hardly read the description, "These are they that come out of the tribulation, the great one," without feeling that a special class of the redeemed must be intended; and, as we have not a shadow of Scripture evidence in support of any favoured and selected class being thus raised to glory, the only idea that can well be entertained is just that which we suppose, the whole multitude of the saved during the period of special warfare and special suffering,—the period during which the power and influence of the hostile world cannot fail to be deeply felt. That period is far from ended. Christians, where numerous and mutually helpful, may escape manifold evils; and may hardly know through what a great and terrible tribulation many true and faithful ones have had to pass. Still, where the world seems to smile, many a sincere Christian has to pass

through just such a tribulation in having to part with many a formerly warm-hearted and most dearly beloved friend. So long as the world remains to so great an extent unconverted to God, and in heart opposed to Jesus Christ, the days of abundant Christian tribulation cannot be ended.

(3) We have, as already said, reserved chap. xiv. 1-5 for more full consideration, as supplying what we deem the most decisive and satisfactory proof of the correctness of the time which we have been supposing.

First. The Lamb, with His sealed and faithful 144,000, symbolic number of the true Church or Israel of God on earth and from age to age, here appears on Mount Zion, the City of David, and thus as the King of that Church or Israel, just as in a different form and at a different time He appeared amidst the golden candlesticks.

Secondly. This appearance of the true Church with its true Head is here set forth in contrast to the corrupt Church with its antichristian head, whose followers all have his fallacious mark on their right hands and foreheads; and therefore, as already suggested, the date of this appearance, after the reign or at least towards the close of the reign of the beast, synchronises with that of the close of the period which we have assigned to the two visions of chapter vii.

Thirdly. This is confirmed by what follows the appearance of the Lamb—namely, a revelation of the fall of Babylon and of the awful punishment of the worshippers of the beast or of those who have his mark.

Fourthly. Connected with the vision of the Lamb and His sealed and faithful 144,000, we have the veil partially removed, and we seem clearly to recognise the same great multitude which we were led to see in the second vision of the seventh chapter. That multitude “cry with a great voice, saying, Salvation to our God and to the Lamb.” Here we have a voice from heaven, which may well be also called “great”; for it is “as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; and the voice which I heard (was) as (the voice) of harpers harping with their harps,”—therefore a great multitude of harpers. In this way, both in chap. vii. and here, we have in closest connection the sealed on earth and the saved multitude in heaven.

Fifthly. The harpers and the saved of chap. vii. most assuredly do the same thing. The new song of salvation, and the “cry, Salvation to our God and to the Lamb,” must be only two ways

of expressing the same thing ; and that the song of the harpers is the song of salvation is made certain by what is added, " And no man " (or, far better, " none or no one," angel or man) " could learn the song save the 144,000, (even) they that had been purchased out of the earth ; " that is, only the actually saved can learn the song of salvation.

Sixthly. This being the case, these countless harpers who had learned it and were actually singing it must have been none else than the sealed ones when they lived and learned the song on earth. In its perfect fulness of meaning, as now perfectly saved, they can and do sing it in heaven. Thus are the two classes identically the same : that is to say, the sealed 144,000 set forth the complete Israel of God along the ages of tribulation on earth ; while the great multitude of harpers is made up of these same sealed ones as, during the same ages, they are gathered together in heaven. This may be even said to be absolutely certain. The sealed must, as a matter of fact, include all the saved, as only the sealed can so sing, or, which is the same thing, can possibly be saved. Those sealed and so saved afterwards, the harvest, and not the firstfruits, will not be sealed " out of the twelve tribes of Israel," but will, we may hope, include the whole Israel of the Millennium.

Hence, *seventhly*, these harpers are, like the sealed ones, described as " purchased from among men," or, which is the same thing, " purchased out of the earth." In this we have another note of identity.

Eighthly. The harpers, thus identified with the great multitude, and therefore that multitude, are declared to be " the firstfruits unto God and unto the Lamb." All the actually saved, all the actually raised to heaven during the period of conflict and conquest, are thus most appropriately called " the firstfruits." They are so because actually gathered home to God and the Lamb. They are so, as, however numerous, not to be equalled in number by those of the universal reign of the Lamb throughout what we presume to think will be the vastly longer period of the millennial ages,—the time of the great and golden harvest. This seems finely illustrated by what Jehovah is represented (Jer. ii. 2, 3) as saying concerning Israel, " Thus saith the Lord, I remember for thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals ; how thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel (was) holiness unto the Lord, the firstfruits of His increase." Here those who came out of Egypt and passed

through the wilderness, the younger generation of those who were delivered from Egypt, the generation which actually entered the promised land, are called "the firstfruits of the increase" of Jehovah. The harvest would consist of the generations which followed. Those who passed through the tribulation of the house of bondage and of the terrible wilderness are fitly called "firstfruits." So here, those saved or "purchased out of the earth or from among men," and led through the great wilderness of trial and conflict, and introduced into the Heavenly Canaan, are, in like manner, appropriately called "the firstfruits unto God and the Lamb." The same Israel, then, on earth, as the sealed, and in heaven as the saved, seem certainly referred to here and in the seventh chapter.

(4) We think we have said enough. We might have added other proofs, or referred to what has been hinted at already. The parallel just drawn might have been confirmed by the reference to the feast of tabernacles in the vision of the great multitude, whose palms of festivity as well as of victory and loyalty seem to point to that feast, and therefore to point to the entrance of Israel into Canaan after the long and painful wilderness journey. This again seems further confirmed by what Hengstenburg has well pointed out as allusions to the wants and distresses of that journey. He means that the touching words, "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat," just form such a promise as might be expected to be made concerning such as were viewed as having come through "the waste howling wilderness" referred to. All this is the more justly to be accepted, as, all along, Christians are represented in this Book as the Israel of God. In chapter i. we found a reference to the formation of Israel into a kingdom after the deliverance from Egypt. And now, in referring to Christians as reaching heaven, what more natural than that they should be viewed as having passed through the wilderness, "come out of the great tribulation," and entered the Canaan above! However, we have said enough as to this; and would now close this entire subject by one practical remark:—

(5) The view thus taken gives us the most cheering and encouraging idea of our own position in our own day. We can look back upon 1800 years of the conflict and conquest of the Lamb or of the Crowned Conqueror, as indicated in this Book, and can now see, as with our own eyes, the very result here pointed out. The Lamb has always had His true Israel, His

symbolic 144,000. He has them now. The antichristian enemy, described as warring against the saints, has long ago appeared, and is now to no small extent put down. He seemed long to triumph; and long the Lamb seemed almost to have withdrawn. In due time He has reappeared. Terribly has the enemy suffered. The predicted doom of Babylon draws near. The Angel of the Everlasting Gospel may be seen and heard proclaiming it "to every nation and tribe and tongue and people." Pure gospel truth has been wonderfully recovered and widely diffused. The Lamb with His faithful 144,000 may now be seen on Mount Zion: that is to say, Jesus may now be seen reigning over a true and faithful Israel, and conducting the soldiers of the cross to all lands, inspired with the full determination to convert the world. We know all this. We see all this. We see the firstfruits; and they may well assure us of a glorious harvest. All foreshown in this Book has up to this date been realised so far as the present world is concerned. What we thus know and even see ought to give perfect assurance of what we cannot literally behold. It ought to make the great multitude all but visible. It ought to make us all but hear the sweet song of those heavenly harpers. It ought to make all desirous of being among the sealed 144,000 on earth; and thus, by following the Lamb, to be in due time added to "the great multitude which no one can number."

IV.

CHAPTERS VIII., IX.

I.

CHAPTER VIII.

OPENING OF THE SEVENTH SEAL, WITH THE VISIONS OF THE FIRST FOUR TRUMPETS, OR REMOVAL OF THE POWER RESTRAINING ANTICHRIST.

1. *Ver.* 1. "And when He opened the seventh seal, there followed a silence in heaven about the space of half an hour."

(1) WE need not say that the exposition of this and the next chapter is attended with not a little difficulty, and has given rise to much discussion. All seems pretty plain when the proper key is applied. Before proceeding with an interpretation, it may be well to make the following remarks.

a. As already indicated, we must carefully avoid the too common error of treating the visions as revealing, through their own order, the real order of the objects or events symbolised. Like the Book of Daniel, but to a far greater extent, the Apocalypse adds vision to vision of one and the same object, because in no other way can that object be set forth in all its various aspects. The architect has to use more than one plan in order to exhibit the simplest house. So more than one symbolic picture must be presented, if a complete idea of a complex object is to be conveyed. Thus, Daniel uses the vision of the image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and that of the rise of the four beasts out of the stormy sea, in order to create a clear conception of the four great empires to which they refer. In this way, we may have to go back again and again to the same point after we have been carried pretty far forward in the stream of time. The vision, for instance, of the twelfth chapter, of the sun-clad woman,

carries us at once farther back and farther forward than does many a previously recorded vision.

b. One most important feature of these visions cannot be overlooked without doing much to conceal the real meaning, or to prevent all right interpretation: namely this,—that the objects symbolised are usually, if not universally, made to appear in the full maximum of their development, and not as under any course, longer or shorter, of that development. Thus the countless multitude of the seventh chapter appears in all its completeness, and not as gradually gathered from age to age by the successive individual departure of the sealed ones from earth to heaven. So, in the vision just referred to, the four beasts symbolising the four empires are represented as all rising out of the sea, one after another, in the shortest time, and in full development. Symbolically they do so. In the interpretation, how unreasonable, nay, how absurd, it would be to overlook or set aside the facts, that they took long periods thus to grow, and that they had been, to a greater or less extent, all growing up together! So of the two beasts of the thirteenth chapter. So we shall find when we come to treat of the visions of the fifth and sixth trumpets. In fact, as hinted at in the case of the empires of Daniel, co-existence and succession are by no means symbolically inconsistent. All four were, for a time, at least, co-existent, and yet the one was in succession overthrown by the other. This feature of maximum development must especially be kept in view, if we would not err exceedingly with respect to both the process and the time of development. What may have taken ages to come to its final height, or to accomplish its full design, may seem the work or product of an instant, or at least of a very short period of time. We shall soon find a case in point in that of the dense smoke of the fifth trumpet, which would seem to be the immediate as well as the one vast result of the one act of the fallen star; whilst we shall find abundant reason for regarding the thing so fearfully symbolised to be the gradually increasing result of a long-continued perverted and perverting agency.

c. It must also be noted that a whole series of similar and connected events or objects may be placed under one head, and represented under one symbol, as if only one event or object were intended. This has been clearly illustrated in the treatment of all the visions of the first six seals. Thus countless strifes, contentions, battles, are all set forth under the one emblem of the rider on the red horse, to whom was given “a great sword,”

—"great," not for one great war, but to represent the sum of the great suffering and slaughter resulting, and that through many ages and many lands, from these countless contests. So, when we read of some great and terrible battle, seemingly fought in one place and at one time, we do well to inquire whether such one battle is intended, or whether by it is meant the sum of, it may be, a very long continued and greatly diversified conflict. May not this latter, for example, be intended by the great battle to which many are looking forward, that of "Har-Magedon"? What if we are now, with all our peace and prosperity, in the very midst of it? Here, and over and over again, the principle of perspective must be applied, if we would rightly interpret many a vision of this most wonderful Book.

d. We may add one more general remark. We may decidedly err, and involve the more obscure parts of this Book in a deeper obscurity, by attempting, not only to find out their general scope or really ascertainable meaning, but also to attach some definite idea to each separate, and, it may be, minute detail, which may not have been intended to convey any express meaning to all. In parabolic and symbolic interpretation, it is of the first importance to discriminate between what forms the real body and what is simply drapery or costume. In dealing with details, it becomes us at least to put no mere conjectural or fancied meaning upon them. Let us be content with what may be pretty clearly seen to be meant, and, should certain details be beyond our reach, let us leave them for others to explain. Is it asked, In all these cases, relating to order, to development, to classification, to detail, how are we to arrive at some satisfactory assurance of correctness of interpretation? To this perhaps the best and only answer is, that, when we use aright the one and only proper key, the result will yield all the satisfaction which we can expect or justly desire.

(2) Here we are told of the opening of the last or seventh seal. What should we most naturally expect to follow? or what should we naturally expect every reader to infer? Surely, that the whole Book was now opened. Yet, this simple idea seems either not to have occurred to the minds of our interpreters, or to have been set aside as fruitless by them. As the Book was sealed with seven seals, and as the Lamb is said to have "overcome, to open the Book and the seven seals thereof," we surely have every reason to conclude that, when all the seals were opened, the entire Book was opened too, or that all that follows

the seventh chapter is to be viewed as no longer under seal, but, like all that preceded, now to be, through vision after vision, practically read or exposed to view. This simple and self-evident idea may perhaps be far more important than it may at first appear.

(3) "*There followed a silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.*" This mysterious silence has created endless conjecture and much unsatisfactory discussion. In keeping with his own peculiar theory, that the real contents of the sealed book are not to be disclosed till the consummation of all things, Alford quotes with favour the beautiful, but we think totally misapplied, saying of Victorinus, "'Semihora, initium quietis æternæ,' the beginning of that blessed sabbatical state of rest, during which the people of God shall be in full possession of those things which ear hath not heard nor eye seen." Others suppose this silence in heaven to correspond with the Jewish custom of silently worshipping whilst the priest was offering incense within the temple. The silence, however, here alluded to took place before anything was done, priestly or otherwise.

Still less correctly, Elliott supposes this silence in heaven, even in the presence of God and of the Lamb, to have been really in this world—at least, to "mean stillness from storms in the firmamental region." As strange and extravagant is the view of Hengstenburg, "So certainly must the silence here denote the dumb astonishment of the raging enemies of Christ and His Church." Barnes well remarks, "There was an awful stillness, as if all heaven were waiting for the development," yet he does not suggest the real cause. Webster and Wilkinson seem to come near the truth,—"*It seems preferable to consider the awful silence merely as a solemn pause introductory to the fearful representations which are about to form the vision of the seventh seal.*" We must not suppose this silence caused by the knowledge of what follows. We need not dismiss from our minds, as mere conjecture, that the awful character of the disclosures of the sixth seal, joined with the glorious character of the vision of the seventh chapter, might well have created the intensest feeling of interest in what was to follow the opening of the seventh seal.

The silence spoken of implies more than such a pause in the development as above referred to. It suggests what we would call, if the case belonged to ourselves, a breathless silence, a silence felt to be due to the profoundest emotion. The real cause we would trace to the express design of Him who opened the

seal, but, in this instance, presented no object for such a time as is here called "the space of half an hour." By this delay He would seem to have intended to deepen the feeling of interest, or to create an intense emotion of anxious expectancy. Than this or some such design, we need seek for no other reason for the pause on the part of the Revealer, and for no other cause of the silence of the worshippers. Nothing could be more appropriate. Much that was most awful was about to be disclosed. The recorded silence is appropriate. Still, we are taught to look for what is of vast concern to the Church of Christ.

2. *Vers. 2-5.* "And I saw the seven angels which stand before God, and there were given unto them seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood over the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense; that he should add it unto the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand. And the angel taketh the censer; and he filled it with the fire of the altar, and cast it upon the earth; and there followed thunders, and voices, and lightnings, and an earthquake."

(1) "*And I saw the seven angels which stand before God; and there were given unto them seven trumpets.*" It seems hard to say how these angels should thus be described. The words are held by some to be borrowed from the Book of Tobit, which they exactly are not, though they seem similarly used. Vitringa regards the article, "*the seven,*" as simply used Hebraistically, and therefore here without force. The general meaning is not affected. But, what of these trumpets? In what way are they to be connected with the Church of God or kingdom of Christ? To those who overlook the fact that that Church or kingdom is treated all through this Book under the character of the Israel of God, and therefore with frequent reference to the typical Israel of the Old Testament, all may seem strange. By keeping this idea fully in view, we shall find that nothing could more fitly set forth what is here intended than the repeated sounding of these trumpet-angels. We must call to mind the expressly declared use of the trumpet from the early times of Israel, in the calling together of the people on special occasions, in sounding an alarm in cases of danger or necessity, in gathering the men of war to battle, in animating those actually engaged in fight. Here we seem to have trumpet after trumpet of alarm, of invasion, of war; as illustrated (Amos iii. 6): "Shall the trumpet be blown in a city, and the people not be afraid?" Far more to

our point, however, are the words of Joel, which we think actually alluded to in the case in hand (chap. ii. 1, 2, 15, 16, 17): "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain; let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand; a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, as the dawn spread upon the mountains; a great people and strong, there hath not been ever the like. . . . Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly; gather the people. . . . Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep . . . let them say, Spare Thy people, O Lord, and give not Thine heritage to reproach, that the nations should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?"—Here we have one trumpet sounding an alarm of invasion and war as a Divine chastisement for departure from Him, and a second trumpet calling a solemn assembly for repentance and prayer, that peace and prosperity may be restored. Though the parallel is by no means complete, as we go on we shall find that these trumpets relate to a time of like, but much more awful, departure from Jesus Christ, and yet in the end to the destruction of the destroyer and to the deliverance of the true Israel of God.

(2) "*And another angel came and stood over the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should add it unto the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand.*" Here we have a description of a season of universal prayer on the part of the true Israel on earth, in keeping with the tabernacle or temple service. We need not suppose that the prayers referred to were those openly and verbally offered in the assemblies of these saints. More especially would all the sighs and cries and groans and tears of individual souls and in secret places, of which such public supplications would be only a feeble and imperfect utterance, be really meant. Among these was doubtless mingled the cry from beneath the altar of the fifth seal. All are here said to have been accompanied with the offering of much incense, doubtless to indicate their acceptance by Him who sits upon the throne. All this clearly implies that the time here referred to was after the Church of Christ had been thoroughly established on earth, and when "all the saints," all the true members of it, were passing through a season of great trouble and anxiety. We shall find,

in fact, that in this respect the nominal Church of Christ had become too like the nation of Israel in the days of Joel above referred to. In the visions of the first six seals, we have nothing to indicate a period, longer or shorter, of the perversion and corruption of the Christian Church. In the supplementary vision of the sealed ones, we have more than a hint of the fact, that "they are not all Israel, which are of Israel." But even there we have no intimation of the awful "falling away," the terrible apostasy, which was to darken the history of the Christian Church for many an age. Without a revelation of this era of spiritual darkness and desolation and woe, the Apocalypse, as an unveiling of the Church's future, would have been greatly defective. However, it is very far from being so.

Almost all that follows the opening of the seventh seal, and, as we have said, the consequent opening of the whole book, is taken up, directly or indirectly, with the rise and reign and fall of the antichristian system—of that paganised Christian Church which has been the most cruel and determined and mighty enemy to the gospel and kingdom of Christ which ever existed in this world. It was more than merely proper that the most fearful and prolonged war between Christ and Antichrist, with the final and glorious triumph of the former, should occupy, as it does, the largest space in this mystic book. We may say, though we do not like to anticipate, that, to whatever else, these trumpet-blasts point to the mysterious rise of the antichristian power; whilst the closely connected vials of the sixteenth chapter set forth that power's tremendous fall. The two are necessarily separated by various important visions which relate to the same great antagonist; but, as just said, they are closely connected, and must both be carefully studied and compared, if we would reach a correct interpretation of either.

Many have regarded the seven trumpets as included in the seventh seal, and the seven vials or bowls as included in the seventh trumpet. This is only so far true. Under the seventh seal we include the whole remaining part of the book, and therefore both trumpets and bowls. Those who thus connect the trumpets with the last of the seals usually regard the trumpets as alone connected with that seal, together of course with the seven bowls, which are in like manner connected with the seventh trumpet. They see no real connection between the many other visions which follow, and the opening of the last seal. It seems never to have occurred to them that the opening of the last seal

and the opening of the book should be held to be one and the same thing.

(3) "*And the angel taketh the censer; and he filled it with the fire of the altar, and cast it upon the earth: and there followed thunders, and voices, and lightnings, and an earthquake.*" Because the altar of incense had just been alluded to, some have supposed that it was here intended. But it should have been noticed that only incense was offered there; so that the censer could not have been thence filled with fire. The altar of burnt-offering seems undoubtedly meant, though it was outside the Most Holy Place. The veil being removed, we can find no reason for denying a reference to the altar of burnt-offering here, any more than to this very altar in the vision of the fifth seal, in which the souls of saints were seen under it. In fact, as already remarked, the cry from under that altar mingled doubtless with the prayers offered with incense and accepted of God. In answer, the censer was filled with the fire of that altar of Christian sacrifice, that it might be cast down upon the earth in token of the doom which would assuredly overtake the persecutors of these saints and the enemies of the true kingdom of Christ; that doom so far indicated by the thunders, voices, lightnings and earthquake which followed. However, we shall find that the trumpets and bowls have to do with a very long period of time, and also with very much which was due to the corruption of the nominal Church; so that, for the real and final answer to the prayers of the saints, we must wait till the very last of these bowls has been poured out. This fact gives very great significance to Alford's acute and just observation:—"One point must be here noticed: the intimate connection between the act of this incense-offering angel and the seven trumpets which follow" (we would add, and the seven bowls also, as included in the seventh trumpet, or as being the realisation of it). "It belongs to them all. It takes place when now the seven angels have had the trumpets given to them, and this series of visions is introduced so that every interpretation must take this into account." Barnes well observes with respect to the act of the angel: "This is a new symbol designed to furnish a new representation of future events. . . *fire of the altar.* . . An image similar to this occurs in Ezek. x. 2, where the man clothed in linen is commanded to go between the wheels under the cherub, and fill his hand with coals of fire from between the cherubim, and to scatter them over the city as a symbol of its destruction. Here, the coals are taken, evidently,

from the altar of sacrifice. . . . On these coals no incense was placed, but they were thrown at once to the earth."

3. *Vers. 6, 7.* "And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. And the first sounded, and there followed hail and fire, mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of the earth was burnt up, and the third part of the trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up."

(1) "*And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.*" All are thus spoken of, as if about to engage in one work, and that a very great work. We have treated the agencies set forth under the seven seals not as successive, as very many suppose, but as contemporaneous, or as such to a great extent. The same seems to be the case with at least the first four trumpets. We may find good reason for regarding the last three as considerably different.

THE FIRST TRUMPET.

(2) "*And the first sounded, and there followed hail and fire, mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth.*" Possibly "land" ought here to be used, as the land and sea of some region of the earth appear to be intended. It has not been sufficiently clearly seen or well marked, that these four trumpets relate thus to one and the same grand whole—some one country, or kingdom, or empire, just as all the plagues of Egypt related to that one kingdom, and were intended to realise one purpose or end. We here have land, sea, fountains of waters, and sun, moon and stars. Though these are referred to successively under the four successive trumpets, as the whole of a nation would naturally suffer from any one great calamity, and not any one special part of it, we may assume that all these plagues, though described in succession, might be intended to show that the whole suffered, without implying that each one part suffered by itself and that no other part suffered at that same time.

The fact, too, that, in each case, the very same proportional amount of evil was done—a third part throughout—seems clearly to imply that no more was intended than that the whole region or kingdom, in all its departments, suffered one vast and common injury. Whilst we appear thus to be presented with some special kingdom or empire having some relation to Christian Israel, as that of Egypt to ancient Israel, we do not think it would be easy

or even possible to find out, by the consideration of these four trumpet-visions alone or apart from what follows, to what nation or empire they certainly relate. That the empire of Rome is intended has long been the opinion of learned and judicious commentators; and we have a full conviction that, unless in the details of interpretation, they are right. Some have supposed an allusion to the Jewish nation; but, besides other reasons, the simple fact that so small a part as a third is said to suffer, is quite decisive against such an idea. If Rome is referred to, whether shall we say, Rome Pagan, Rome Papal, or Rome in transition from its Pagan to its Papal state? The visions of themselves, we are assured, do not determine. Must all, then, be mere conjecture? or, may not the idea as to Rome be altogether wrong? Though the four trumpet-visions do not or cannot of themselves determine, we think the evidence perfectly sufficient to decide as to the proper and only satisfactory interpretation. The matter is of vast importance; and, though only through the exposition of a number of the following chapters can full satisfaction be obtained, we think it best here to treat pretty fully of the point, however much we may have to anticipate what would be more naturally dealt with exclusively afterwards. Our discussion may be viewed as a parenthetical section.

(3) That these four trumpet-visions pertain to the Roman Empire, and that to its "Decline and Fall," seems evident for the following reasons:—

a. As already said, they all pertain to one and the same country, kingdom, or empire. This we shall simply assume as what will be found through our subsequent exposition.

b. The first four trumpets are especially distinguished from the last three, as may be found by careful study, and as we find clearly indicated by the "great voice" from mid heaven, "Woe, woe, woe, for them that dwell on the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, who are yet to sound." The last three have thus, usually and fitly, been called "woe-trumpets." At a glance it will be seen that the first two of these differ from the four in question in one marked particular, namely, that, whilst the four relate to the decline or even fall of one power, the two relate to the rise of two new and most terrible powers, which will be found closely connected, as if one great double power.

c. The terrible power just referred to of the fifth trumpet is expressly set forth as having its origin in the abyss or bottomless

pit, the very abode of Satan, and thus as being not human and earthly, but satanic and hellish, in its origin and character. But we find, under another symbolic form, another like terrible power, declared to be of like origin and character,—even the beast from the abyss or bottomless pit of chap. xi. 7 and chap. xvii. 8, of which we are told, *first*, in relation to the two witnesses, “When they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that cometh out of the abyss or bottomless pit shall make war with them, and overcome them, and kill them”; and, *secondly*, in relation to “The beast that carrieth the woman,” “The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and is about to come up out of the abyss or bottomless pit, and to go into perdition.” All three, then, are of the same origin and character; and, the more carefully we study the passages in which they are referred to, the more clearly will they appear to be one and the same terrible power. In due time it will be fully proved that the beast of chap. xvii. 8 is most certainly an awful symbol of the revived Roman empire, the fallen Pagan empire restored in a new empire in spirit and character like it, or to be identified with it. No other such new or revived empire can we by any possibility find but that of the corrupt and paganised Church, the empire of Papal Rome. But the one empire had to fall before the other could fully rise. The first four trumpets set forth a sufficiently great fall; the fifth and sixth trumpets set forth a like sufficiently great rise. All this will be clearly seen as we afterwards treat of the seventeenth chapter in connection with the thirteenth, in which the wounded head of the beast will be found to represent the fallen Pagan empire, whilst the beast out of the abyss will be found to represent that fallen empire or wounded head as raised or healed and revived, and therefore to represent, as we have said, no other than the Papal empire, which, as a matter of absolutely certain history, took its place, and after its fall.

d. This new Pagan empire, or perverted and paganised Christian power, we find wonderfully described by the Apostle Paul in 2 Thess. ii. 1—12, in that very relation of succession to Pagan Rome which we have been considering, and that, too, in striking resemblance to that unveiled under the fifth trumpet. There Paul sets forth a falling away within the Church itself which was to be so vast and so unique that he calls it The Apostasy, ἡ ἀποστασία, and which was to culminate in the appearance of a fearful power of evil, which he calls “The man of sin,” “The lawless one.” These names point to the one great

Antichrist whose certain and fearful coming was familiar to the minds of the early Christians. We find John saying, "Little children, it is the last time (or hour): and as ye heard that Antichrist cometh, even now have there arisen many antichrists,"—many of the same hostile and deceptive spirit, but not *the* one Antichrist.

The Thessalonian Christians had heard of this same evil power, and they are assured that Christ cannot come till this power has been revealed. We may quote the following,—“Let no man beguile you in any wise: for (it will not be, or Christ will not come), except the falling away, The Apostasy, come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped: so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God. Remember ye not that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?” (clearly indicating that, as we have above said, the idea of the coming of a great Antichrist or antichristian power was predicted and made widely known among the Apostolic Churches). “And now ye know that which restraineth, to the end that he may be revealed in his own season. For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work” (so that, as John says, “there are many antichrists”): “only (there) is one that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord shall slay (or consume) with the breath of His mouth, and bring to nought by the manifestation of His coming (or presence); (even he) whose coming” (presence will not do here, and therefore is not to be used in the other cases) “is according to the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders (or wonders of falsehood), and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that are perishing; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be judged (or condemned) who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

In these striking words we have unmistakably presented to our minds,—(a) The coming of a great apostasy from Christ within His own Church. (b) As already said, that apostasy would culminate in the coming of Antichrist, here called “the man of sin,” the lawless one, because of his spirit and character, and “the son of perdition” because of his origin and destiny. (c) The spirit of this apostasy, “the mystery of lawlessness,” was even

then at work, and, unless for some special obstacle, some restraining power, might soon have come to a fearful head. (*d*) Though spoken of as a mighty individual person, we have perfectly sufficient reason for regarding this Antichrist or "man of sin" as rather a succession of men than one individual man. In both Daniel and the Apocalypse the singular "king" is used of a succession of kings, or of a kingdom including its order of kings. So we naturally understand here. At the very least, the mode of expression used cannot disprove such a succession or order, provided we have evidence in support of it. (*e*) The character of this "man of sin" and that of the beast of the Apocalypse so fully correspond, that we can have no reason to doubt their real identity. We cannot suppose that any two so perfectly like could possibly arise. We are nowhere told of two or more. We are simply and solely told of one. Of that one the prophetic delineations of Paul and John perfectly agree. Both are of Satan. Both usurp the prerogatives of God. Both are fearfully antagonistic to Christ. Both fearfully deceive and destroy the people of God, the Church of Christ. Both go into perdition. (*f*) The restraining power had to be removed before the apostate antichristian power could fully assert itself and freely carry on its delusive and destructive work. The same we hold to be set forth here: the empire of the first four trumpets had to be wasted before the two terrible agencies, the dual empire of the fifth and sixth trumpets, could arise.

Our argument seems thus complete, provided the restraining power, which had to be put out of the way, was that of the then existing Pagan Rome. That it was so has been most generally held. It was so by Christians who lived under it. So much was this the case, that many dreaded the fall of the empire, however unfriendly to them, lest that fall should, as it actually did, leave the Church in the hands of Antichrist, a more terrible enemy still. So intense was the feeling of anxiety as to this, that we are told of how prayers were offered for the continuance of the empire on this very account. The words of Paul, on which we have been remarking, had then a most powerful influence in thus awakening alarm. "We pray for the emperors and the empire of Rome," said Tertullian, "for we know that convulsions and calamities threatening the whole world, and the end of the world itself, are kept back by the intervention of the Roman empire." So Lactantius: "Only while the city is safe, there seems reason not to apprehend." Others express the same feeling. In favour

of this view we may well say that, whilst we may easily see how the empire could and did in the course of time restrain and prevent the full and free development of the terrible apostasy which issued in the Papal power, it seems utterly impossible to find in all history any other restraining force which did act or could have acted as Paul affirms : as a matter of fact, the Bishop of Rome went on from age to age to display an ever-growing ambition to assume a headship over the Christian Church.

The claim of supremacy was long and often most fiercely contested by the Bishop of Rome, the western capital, and by the Bishop of Constantinople, the eastern capital, of the enfeebled and decaying empire. For a time the Bishop of Constantinople seemed to have the advantage, because of the presence and support of the Emperor, who had made that city his imperial abode. This support, which in the first instance tended to encourage the aspirations of episcopal ambition in the East, in the second instance continued afterwards to act as such a check or restraint that that ambition never was allowed free scope to realise full worldly and political power. The very restraint spoken of by Paul thus remained in the East ; so that no such terrible agency as that which he describes could, even if persistently aimed at, have been freely developed there. The reverse was the case in the West. The removal of the Emperor and the imperial government gave to episcopal ambition the most ample scope. The Roman Bishop waxed stronger and stronger in worldly influence and power. The result of the invasions of the Goths and other barbarians prepared the way, often certainly for the exercise of a really useful episcopal influence and control, yet also for the progressive triumph of spiritual pride and ecclesiastical ascendancy. The Bishop dared to usurp the very throne, or rather perhaps thrones, at once of the Cæsar and of Christ, and to call himself by the name of the Vicar of Christ ; as finally he came to claim as such the right to fill both thrones, and thus, as the fully developed power said by Paul to "sit in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God," proudly and blasphemously to present himself to mankind, even as he still does, as the mighty head of the kingdom of heaven on earth and of all the kingdoms of the world.

(4) Long after the above was written, in reading a certain work of Cardinal Manning, we were much struck with what seemed the very strong support which, at so comparatively recent a date, so able a writer and so ardent a defender of the very

highest claims of the Pope, most assuredly, though aiming at the reverse, gives to the view of the restraining power above maintained. We shall quote the following from his able work entitled, "The Temporal Power of the Vicar of Jesus Christ." P. xl. "1. It is self-evident that the temporal sovereignty of the Popes is a power relative to Christian peoples and princes, forasmuch as it is by baptism and regeneration alone that men, and therefore nations, become subjects of the Church. In the first period of three hundred years, while as yet the civil powers of the world were pagan, these prerogatives of the Vicars of Christ had no subject-matter for their exercise. They existed in the plenitude of their office; but they were related to an order to be afterwards created." (From early times, then, the humble bishops or elders of Rome are thus supposed to have looked forward to be temporal kings, and yet in that kingdom which the True King declared to be "not of this world." Certainly the Roman Empire would be an antagonistic force against such ambition.) . . . Pp. xli.—xliv. "2. The second period may be called the period of liberation. To the least discerning it must be manifest that God had some purpose of His divine wisdom in the migration of Constantine and of the empire from Rome to Byzantium. What could be more improbable than that an emperor should forsake the imperial city of a thousand years? or that a Christian prince should, in the very fervour of his conversion, depart from the Vicar of Jesus Christ? Surely it was in the Divine Will to show to the world that His Church has no need of human support." (Be it so. Constantine did not recognise any Vicar of Christ, unless it was himself, who claimed to be just exactly what the Pope is called,—"*Isapostolos* and Bishop of bishops." Constantine was thus the restraining power.) . . . "Now, the abandonment of Rome was the liberation of the Pontiffs. Whatsoever claims to obedience the emperors may have made, and whatsoever compliance the Pontiff may have yielded, the whole previous relation, anomalous, and annulled again and again by the vices and outrages of the emperors, was finally dissolved by a higher power." (Admirable!—the first Christian Prince forfeited his claims by his own act of removing the court and government to a new capital, *because of the vices of the pagan emperors!* . . . "The providence of God permitted a succession of irruptions, Gothic, Lombard, and Hungarian, to desolate Italy, and to efface from it every remnant of the empire. The Pontiffs found themselves alone; the sole fountains of order, peace, law and safety,

And from the hour of this providential liberation, when by a Divine intervention the chains fell off from the hands of the successor of St. Peter, as once before from his own, no sovereign has ever reigned in Rome except the Vicar of Jesus Christ." (We shall say nothing as to the logic of the Cardinal. Only it is to be observed that by the liberation of the Bishop of Rome he does not mean deliverance from persecution and the like, but emancipation from the yoke of any and every temporal king or emperor, not only of Rome, but of the whole world.)

He goes on to describe the power which had been long growing up within the empire, "embodied in one person, the Bishop of Rome." . . . "On him devolved, by the inevitable operation of a moral and political necessity, the chief authority to sustain, protect and uphold the broken and abandoned social order of Rome and Italy. The floods which swept all other authorities away threw out into bolder relief and more conspicuous prominence the supreme pastoral authority of the Vicars of Jesus Christ." (That is to say, the so-called vacancy of the Roman throne was designed to convert a spiritual pastor into a temporal prince, the Bishop of Rome into a king or rather into the Emperor of the world.) These extracts should do more than suffice. They clearly show that one, called by a prince of Rome "the Vicar of Christ," was to no small extent freed, by the removal of the Roman government to Constantinople, to rise towards the very height of his long-coveted authority and power. All was Divine Providence, according to Dr. Manning and other Roman Catholics. All was the result of predicted apostasy and blasphemous assumption—the assumption of an office which none save the Divine Head of the Christian Church could possibly discharge.

Again, we shall now quote what we hold to be clear proof that the power thus liberated, according to the Cardinal, is so described by him as to demonstrate that it was indeed the very power described by Paul. The very title of the Pope, "The Vicar of Christ," is itself proof sufficient. The only one who can possibly fill the real office of Vicar of Christ on earth is just the Vicar, the one and only Vicar whom Christ has Himself expressly appointed and sent—even the Holy Spirit, called by Him "another Comforter," who will abide with His true people for ever, and who "shall teach them all things." He who usurps so purely a Divine office, and who calls himself and allows or rather commands others to call him by the name of Vicar of Christ, certainly does what Paul declares,—“he sitteth in the

temple of God,"—the Church of Christ, "setting himself forth as God." In keeping with this we find (p. 180), "His own personal sovereignty consists in this : first, that, as Vicar-representative of Jesus Christ, who is King of kings and Lord of lords, to whose hand all power in heaven and earth is given, he is liberated by Divine right from all civil and temporal subjection to any ruler or prince on earth. Thus he is in himself a personal sovereign, and can be subject to none ; and thus, also, he has, in virtue of his Pontificate, a Divine authority over all other powers, personal or princely, that can be found among men ; forasmuch as when our Divine Lord said to Peter, 'Feed My sheep,' He gave the whole world into his hands ; He committed to him, not only the direction of individuals one by one, but the direction of families, of households, of all the collective forms of natural society. The Church of God is the guide, not only of the individual conscience in relation to itself, but in all its manifold orders and relations ; not only of the child to the parent, but of the parent to the child. The Church of God guides, therefore, the family and the household ; and if the family and the household, then nations and peoples. For what are the races and nations of the earth but the families of mankind multiplied and expanded ? What are kingdoms and empires but the families of man aggregated together ? And as the Church of God guides the father of a household, so it guides the ruler of a kingdom. Our Divine Lord committed to Peter and his successors the direction and guidance of the civil order which should arise in the world, of nations and their princes. It is his Divine office to see, and his duty to enforce, obedience to the faith and to the laws of God. It is his official duty, therefore, to judge and to pronounce on the acts of individuals and peoples, of nations and their princes. The sole tribunal on earth which can guide and direct the consciences of men is the Church of God, and this office centres in its Head. This, then, is the personal sovereignty which is inherent in the Pontificate of the Vicar of Jesus Christ."

Such is the power which Cardinal Manning declares to have been liberated from all human authority by the removal of the emperor and government of Rome from the western to the eastern capital of the empire. The Vicar of Christ ! Above all human authority ! Lord of the whole world ! The temporal and spiritual guide of all mankind,—of every individual apart, of every family apart, of all children in relation to their parents and of all parents

in relation to their children, of all kingdoms in relation to their kings and of all kings in relation to their kingdoms, of all races and nations, and so of all the nations of the world in relation to one another! Does such a crown become a human head? Was there ever a mere human head that could wear such a crown? Is there no assumption of Divine prerogative here? Are not Paul's and Dr. Manning's descriptions of the great mysterious liberated power to all intents one and the same description? Than the words of Paul, "who sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God," can we find any words more exactly descriptive of "the Vicar of Christ" as above set forth by Dr. Manning? Let us quote his own interpretation of these awful words (p. 112): "Now, it is easy to understand how he will oppose God, being the antagonist of Christ; and how he will exalt or lift himself above all that is called God and worshipped; because, in supplanting the true Messias, he places himself in the stead of the Incarnate God." Precisely so. And, we ask, could the Cardinal give any more correct description of the Pope? By impiously assuming to occupy a place which no created being can possibly fill, calling himself, and being idolatrously called by millions, "the Vicar of Christ," in what words can the Pope be better described than in these very words,—"*He will exalt or lift himself above all that is called God and worshipped; because, in supplanting the true Messias, he places himself in the stead of the Incarnate God*"?

Just one point more. Dr. Manning, like all Roman Catholics, insists on this,—that "the Antichrist," or "the man of sin," is one individual person, and not a succession of persons, however all one in office. Page 103: "He is described with all the attributes of a person. In this one passage St. Paul calls him 'that wicked one' . . . 'the man of sin' . . . and 'son of perdition' . . . And St. John in four places speaks of him as the Antichrist. To deny the personality of Antichrist is therefore to deny the plain testimony of Holy Scripture. . . . It is a law of Holy Scripture, that when persons are prophesied of, persons appear; as, for instance, the prophecies of John the Baptist, or of the Blessed Virgin, or of our Lord Himself. . . ." P. 105: "He may indeed embody a spirit and represent a system, but is not less, therefore, a person. . . . Bellarmine says, 'All Catholics hold that Antichrist will be one individual person.'" So they may well try to do. It is their only hope. It is true that the Scriptures allude to prophetic persons as persons; but it is also

and equally true that they describe successions of persons as if they were single or individual persons. Thus, what could be apparently more exclusively descriptive of one individual person, than in Daniel ii., "Thou, O king, sawest, and behold, a great image. . . . Thou, O king, art a king of kings. . . . Thou art the head of gold"? Could any but Nebuchadnezzar, as one individual person, be here meant? Certainly not, according to the Cardinal's principles of interpretation; but as certainly yes, according to the whole scope of the prophecy, in which succession of kings after succession, or succession of whole kingdoms after succession, is clearly set forth.

But, to come nearer home, could promises be more certainly made to one individual person alone than those made to the apostle Peter? Yet, might not the Cardinal's own interpretation of these be well described in his own words (p. 104),—"What I may call the corporate interpretation is modern" (post-Apostolic), "heretical, controversial, and unreasonable." The very name, "Vicar of Christ," is just as naturally descriptive of one individual person as is any of the names in question, "the Antichrist," "the Man of Sin," "the Son of Perdition." These, as well as it, might be, and actually are, used of a succession of "Vicars" or "supplanters" of Jesus Christ, who, usurping His throne, "place themselves in the stead of the Incarnate God."

(5) "*There followed hail and fire, mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of the earth (or land) was burnt up, and the third part of the trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.*" As the vials and bowls are afterwards said to contain the "seven plagues (which are) the last," we may perhaps regard these trumpets as having to do with what may be fitly called "the first plagues," especially as we find the two series closely connected. We have here, assuredly, a direct allusion to the plague of hail inflicted on the land of Egypt or on the oppressors of Israel. That in Egypt was literal; and is here used symbolically of an agency in some way destructive of this like oppressing or persecuting kingdom. The great matter for us here to remark is not so much the means figuratively said to be used as the end really effected. Various kinds of agency might be symbolised by that described. "A third part," we are told, "of the land, trees, and grass, was burned up," or destroyed. Like the means, the result is thus most highly figuratively described. By "a third," we may fairly understand a large part. The simple and general meaning will

be, that the country or kingdom intended was greatly injured, wasted, weakened. More than this we may not be able to gather, or it may not have been intended for us to know.

As already pointed out, we must be careful as to the view we take of mere details, especially when they are given in the language of symbol. We need not wonder, then, to find any one saying with Alford,—“I must confess that I have never seen, in any Apocalyptic commentator, an interpretation of these details at all approaching to verisimilitude; never any which is not obliged, by the plain sense of the words, or the certain course of the history, to make them fit the requisite theory.” This may be perfectly true. The error may be with the commentators in seeking the literal in the figurative, the symbolised in the symbol, historical fact in poetical prophecy. Remembering, also, how often the principle of perspective must be applied in prophetic interpretation, and how many similar and successive effects may be symbolised under the form of one vast result, we may very greatly err, if we suppose “the third part” spoken of as all injured or destroyed at one and the same time. Accordingly, we take this first trumpet as simply pointing to some great blow, or rather series of blows, dealt by a hostile Providence against the Roman empire, through which both country and people seem greatly to have suffered. That the people thus suffered, we may safely infer from the fact that the hail and fire are said to be “mingled with blood.” From the nature of this agency, it has been usually held that a reference is made to the many and terrible invasions of the Gothic and other northern barbarous tribes, by whom the fair fields and cultured citizens of Italy were often desolated and destroyed, and even Rome itself captured, plundered, and “brought very low.” We are very far from objecting to this view, if such invasions are allowed simply to form a part of the causes which affected the decaying empire, or if to them we add the countless internal evils which of themselves could not fail sooner or later to have issued in the same fearful result.

THE SECOND TRUMPET.

4. *Vers. 8-12.* “And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; and there died the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, (even) they that had life; and the third part of the ships was destroyed. And the third angel sounded, and there fell from heaven a great star, burning as a torch, and it fell upon the third

part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; and the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter. And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; that the third part of them should be darkened, and the day should not shine for the third part of it, and the night in like manner."

(1) We may group these visions thus together as, with that just considered, all relating to one and the same object—the fall of the Roman empire. Much already said, too, is applicable to all alike. Certainly, if we attempt to enter minutely into the details or to find historical facts corresponding to all of them, we shall not only "darken counsel," but depart from all right judgment. Much is here said to be simply done. Human instrumentality or natural causation is not introduced, at least so far as the agencies of evil are themselves concerned. A mass of burning matter, vast as if it were a mountain, is cast into the sea. Whence or how, we are not told. Just as the plagues of Egypt were miracles of God, so these causes of the intended effect are set forth as such miracles also. God used certain means of effecting His purpose; and these are set forth in symbolic form. For any one object at all resembling such a burning mass, it were vain to look. A second constituent department of the one suffering empire is referred to: the sea with all its finny tribes on the one hand, and all its naval and commercial enterprises on the other. Here, the sea is so far affected as was the Nile of Egypt. The waters of both become blood. Life is destroyed. Those "who go down to the sea in ships" greatly suffer. As the first trumpet refers to the land, this naturally relates to the sea. The empire suffers to like extent, but in different ways, in both cases. The entire commerce would be affected. We cannot, with Elliott, here suppose a reference to "the maritime provinces of Africa," or of any other region. These are included in the earth or land of the previous trumpet.

The northern invasions may, indeed, be included, in so far as they affected the commercial prosperity of the empire. This mighty burning mass has been viewed as symbolising a nation moving along with terrible energy, seeking for foreign conquest, and carrying desolation and death everywhere along with it. Babylon is certainly called a mountain in the Old Testament; but here we are not told of a mountain, but simply of what

resembled one. We are, therefore, disposed to regard this mighty burning mass as symbolic of the sum of numerous causes appointed and directed by Divine Providence to effect the one purpose of hurting a second constituent department of the decaying empire. The expression "*the third*," here used over and over again, seems simply to imply that all suffered, suffered greatly, and suffered roundly in somewhat the same proportion. More than the most general idea of loss universally sustained, seems by no means to be designedly conveyed.

THE THIRD TRUMPET.

(2) The same line of remark might be pursued with reference to the two remaining visions. The third relates to another department : "*There fell from heaven a great star, burning as a torch.*" In this case we appear to have no reason to regard this star as an emblem of the Christian ministry. The natural heavens overhead seem referred to. It is a falling and not a fallen star, as if a brightly burning meteor. Like the mighty mountain-like mass, it seems a creation of God, the sum of the many causes for ages at work and operating in the very heart of society, and that to the fearful embitterment of human life. Hence the symbolic name. The result was as if all the waters were made bitter as wormwood itself. All life and all the sources of life were affected. The words under the corresponding vial or bowl tend to confirm this. The precise result, and the exact way or ways in which that result would be brought about, we are not, from the very general data, able with certainty to decide.

As we are now considering a long period after the reign of Constantine, we are not to trace all to pagan elements of bitter strife and discord. Such elements are doubtless involved ; and we may not far miss the mark if we trace much at least of the bitter result to the admixture of the discordant and ever contending elements of Christian, heretical and pagan belief. We need not suppose the causes of all this distress exclusively all physical, all mental, or all moral and religious, but really a mighty combination or co-operation of all. At any rate, any obscurity which may rest upon the exact meaning of the vision need not interfere with a sufficiently clear apprehension of the more general import. Whatever the means, the fearful result was a most unhappy state of society, just such as is sure to follow the disorganisation, the invasions, the conflict of races and opinions which thus afflicted the empire and tended to its ruin.

Whether there was any one special source of evil which could in some way resemble this most remarkable symbol, we at least cannot profess to know. "This falling star," says Wordsworth, "whose name is Wormwood, represents heresy; and particularly those heresies concerning the natures and Person of Christ, and the Divinity of the Holy Spirit, and Divine grace and free will, which prevailed in the fifth and sixth centuries after Christ." This may, as we have hinted, have been partly meant. Not a few suppose that here we have a reference to one who might well be compared to a brilliant, but most malignant meteor,—we mean Attila, the king of the Huns, whose terrible ravages caused great suffering, and gained for him the name of "the Scourge of God." If this could be fairly maintained, the symbol employed would at least appear very appropriate. In favour of this Barnes has well said, "A star falling from heaven would be a natural symbol of one who had left a higher station, or of one whose character and course would be like a meteor shooting through the sky. . . . We look for a prince or warrior of brilliant talents, who appears suddenly and sweeps rapidly over the world; who excites consternation and alarm, and whose path is marked by desolation, and who is regarded as sent from heaven to execute the Divine purposes—who comes not to bless the world by brilliant talents well directed, but to execute vengeance on mankind."

This is very good so far as the symbolic star is concerned. Yet we cannot but see an instance of that commingling of symbols and realities which has led to so much misinterpretation, in what follows:—"It is natural to look for some desolations that would particularly affect the portions of the world where rivers abound, and where they take their rise." Though referring to the metaphorical sense, he again returns to the literal, and speaks of Attila as with propriety "represented in the symbol as affecting 'a third part' of these rivers and fountains. At least a third part of the empire was invaded and desolated by him in his savage march, and the *effects* of his invasion were as disastrous on the empire as if a bitter star had fallen into a third part of those rivers and fountains, and converted them into wormwood." We have thus quoted partly to illustrate the confusion just referred to, and partly as illustrating what we meant by saying that the general meaning is clear, however obscure the more precise import. In these words Barnes commits the error of treating the star symbolically and the waters literally. Then he recovers himself, and says very correctly, "the *effects* of his inva-

sion were as disastrous as if a bitter star had fallen into a third part of the waters." This comes near to what we have said, that the *ends* or "*effects*" of the mysterious agency are sufficiently clearly set forth, whilst the agency itself may not be equally well made known. Let us first suppose the waters designed to set forth the resources of life and prosperity. Then we cannot well suppose a more suitable symbol of all the combined means of embittering and destroying these, including such an agency as that of Attila and other like invaders, than that of such a malignant star. Apart from all detail, may not all that is meant be put briefly in these words (Jer. ix. 13-15), "*And the Lord saith, because they have forsaken My law . . . behold, I will feed them . . . with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink*" ?

THE FOURTH TRUMPET.

(3) "*And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten . . . that the third part of them should be darkened, and the day should not shine for the third part of it, and the night in like manner.*" Here we have an instance of what we have been supporting as to the design of the details—namely, that they are by no means unexceptionally to be regarded as having each a separate or definite meaning. As sun and moon and stars are all spoken of, both day and night are referred to; yet it would be most unreasonable to infer that the day was here a symbol of one thing and the night of another. The real idea expressed seems simply this: that the entire sources of light were affected up to a third or great part, and that therefore they failed to give their natural or full amount of light. As a matter of fact, these emblems might represent as well the ruling powers of the world as the pastors and teachers of the Church. The context alone can determine. As the Roman empire is referred to, the former must be understood. At the time which we have been supposing, the imperial government suffered a terrible eclipse. The removal of the court to Constantinople had the effect of leaving Italy exposed to all the violence of the northern invasions on the one hand, and to all the disorders of internal contentions on the other, so that the imperial splendour of former times was, as here set forth, shorn of more than a third of its brightness and glory. In fact, the empire of these four trumpet-visions lost more than a third of its dominion and power by sea as well as on land, of its resources of life and

prosperity as well as of the central or governmental power here alluded to. In support of the spirit of the above, we may add the following from Alford:—"The third part of the sun was struck' (it is not said, as in the case of the other trumpets, *with what*. And the absence of an instrument perhaps teaches us not to attribute too much import to the instruments by which the previous judgments are brought about. It is the *πληγη* (the plague) itself, not the instrument, on which attention should be directed."

(4) Thus, then, these four visions, evidently setting forth distinct aspects of one and the same object,—the Roman empire, as we have held,—point to a marked and most important period of history,—that period during which Rome was rapidly sinking and passing away, whilst the kingdoms into which it was ultimately, and according to Daniel, destined to be divided, were beginning to rise; and whilst, in the midst of all and powerfully affecting all, a kingdom was waxing stronger and stronger, and, through its admixture of good and evil, of Christianity and Paganism, becoming at once the mightiest and most mysterious power, spiritually and politically, which ever controlled the kings and kingdoms of the world.

5. *Ver. 13.* "*And I saw and heard an angel (or eagle),*" (see chap. xiv. 6) "*flying in mid-heaven, saying with a great voice, Woe, woe, for them that dwell on the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, who have yet to sound.*"

By this remarkable vision of an angel flying in mid-heaven, and proclaiming a threefold woe on the inhabitants of the earth, we seem to have vividly set before our minds some great crisis in the history of the world. The Roman power has been reduced to weakness, and is approaching its predicted doom—in one sense total extinction, in another a manifold division into states or kingdoms of a new and peculiar character, and that because of their unique relation to a most mysterious kingdom at once within them and over them. This has been again and again referred to. This mighty cry of the eagle or angel points to some broad line of demarcation between the first four and the last three trumpets. It suggests quite a new era in the history of the kingdom of Christ and the kingdoms of the world. We have treated the former as virtually contemporaneous, and pertaining to one and the same object. To some considerable extent the latter follow in succession.

Before proceeding further, we may quote the following:—Alford: “‘*An eagle.*’ . . . Not an angel in eagle’s shape; but a veritable eagle in the vision . . . ‘*flying in mid-heaven,*’ i.e., in the south or noonday sky, where the sun reaches the meridian, for which *μεσουρανέιν* is the word . . . the eagle flies there, to be seen and heard of all. I may also notice that the whole expression favours the true reading *ἀετοῦ* as against the substitute *αγγέλου*.” Hengstenburg: “The eagle, according to an entire series of passages in the Old Testament, is excellently fitted as a symbol and messenger of the Divine judgment, especially of such as consists of hostile oppression. . . . Instead of an eagle, some critical helps, which Luther follows, have an angel. But this reading has merely originated in the vicious realism of the exposition, which appears also in the remarks of several, who retain *an eagle*, that by this eagle is to be understood here an angel like an eagle.” The Revisers and our best critics here favour “eagle” of the best MSS. rather than “angel” of our Authorised Version. Whilst we could not help feeling that “angel” was really the more appropriate, we would have fully yielded to such authority. However, after coming to the conclusion that (chap. xiv. 6) “*another angel flying in mid-heaven*” was intended to correspond for an important purpose with this, we have been led to infer that “angel” is the correct reading here, as it appears to be certainly the correct reading there. This will appear when we treat of chap. xiv. 6, just alluded to. Elliott: “This vision, occurring as it does between the fourth trumpet-vision and the fifth, corresponds with that period of time which intervened between the extinction of the last rays of the old government of Rome, and the rise of Mahomet and the Saracens: an interval of from forty to forty-five years, which we may date from Justinian’s death, or the Lombards’ establishment in Italy, 565 to 570; and which was chiefly memorable in Rome and Roman Christendom from the Pontificate which closed it of Pope Gregory the Great. It is a period of transition from what we may designate as the ancient to the more modern division of modern history; and this both as regards the west and the east. As such it is notable and noted by historians. . . . It was now between five and six hundred years from the time of Christ’s birth, and according to the chronology of the Septuagint, then generally received in Roman Christendom, six thousand years had elapsed from the Creation. Now, not among the Jews only, but among the Christian fathers also, the idea had been enter-

tained, from Barnabas and Irenæus downwards, that the seventh Millennium was to be the Millennium of the triumph of the Church : a consummation great and glorious, but to be preceded immediately by the last grand outbreak of evil, under Antichrist, and the destruction of the world. Gregory the Great . . . came to the conviction that *the last judgment* was at hand ; and in many of his letters expressed his conviction. . . . Thus throughout the length and breadth of Christendom . . . his warning voice was directed. Charged with presage of the dreadful evil, . . . was it not like the angel . . . that cried, Woe, woe, woe ? Nor in his warning cry . . . did he omit the warning of Antichrist being at hand also. He connected the one awful apprehension with the other. . . . A notable occasion had arisen to call forth the public declaration of his sentiments. The Patriarch of Constantinople, John the Faster, had just then assumed the title to himself, —though not, we may be assured, in the full meaning of the words,—of *Universal Bishop*. Against this, Gregory, as indeed Pope Pelagius just before him,—raised his most solemn protestations. In letters written and published at different times, from 590 to nearly the end of the century, and addressed to the Greek Emperor, the Empress, etc., . . . he declared before Christendom, that whosoever in the elation of his spirit called himself or sought to be called *Universal Bishop*, or *Universal Priest*, that man was the likeness, the precursor, and the preparer for Antichrist ; —that he bore the same characteristic of boundless pride and self-exaltation ; that the tendency of his assumption, if consented to, was that which was the grand object of Antichrist—viz., *to withdraw* all members of the Church from its only true head, CHRIST JESUS, and to attach and connect them in the stead with *himself*."

We have quoted these words, not as by any means agreeing with the writer in his view of the two following visions, but as recording facts and setting forth a state of things in remarkable harmony with the crisis here indicated by the cry of woe, or this striking pre-announcement of coming evils,—evils vastly greater than even those of the previous visions. If Elliott had not been mistaken as to the next trumpets, if he had seen that Romanism and not Mohammedanism was about to be unveiled, he would have seen a vastly deeper meaning in the facts which he has recorded. What in the way of coincidences, to say nothing of Providence, can well be compared with the fact that, just before the actual assumption of the proud and impious claim to supreme

and universal priesthood, or Popedom, a bishop of Rome, constrained by the proud assumption of the bishop of Constantinople, should thus have been led to denounce the daring presumption of his own successors, and so most solemnly to protest against all future Popery? The cry of Gregory and the cry of the angel were to all intents identical. We simply point to the coincidence. One lesson at least we may well learn : even that of upholding no religious system which would put any human being in the place which Jesus Christ can alone occupy, or in any way between Him and the souls of men. The first woe-trumpet brings us face to face with the "man of sin," the Antichrist, the true head of the great apostasy. We have been contemplating the removal of the great restraining power. This first woe-trumpet reveals the terrible result. We shall only add, we have another cry of woe which clearly corresponds with this, and which we may regard as contemporaneous, if not even identical with it : chap. xii. 12, "Woe for the earth and the sea : because the devil is gone down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time."

II.

CHAPTER IX.

VISIONS OF FIFTH AND SIXTH TRUMPETS, OR THE RISE OF ANTICHRIST AND THE ANTICHRISTIAN KINGDOM.

THE FIFTH TRUMPET.

1. WE have already so far presented the evidence that these visions pertain to the great antichristian system or apostasy so strongly depicted by Paul in 2 Thess. ii. 1—12, in which a mighty Satanic agency, as here, is fully described. The symbolic language here used is apt at first to conceal rather than to reveal what is meant. Fuller study brings the meaning to light. Our argument is very simple. The agency here described is said to rise out of the abyss. This agency, as already pointed out, is to be identified with the beast which is said to rise out of the abyss. In the proper place, we think we shall clearly show that the beast from the abyss is to be identified with the great apostasy of Paul. In this vision, then, we have the origin of the terrible power symbolised by the terribly described beast from the abyss. In harmony with this, and in support of it, we observe—

2. This terrible agency is one of spiritual or religious error and deception. This is proved by what we are told it cannot do: The locusts cannot hurt any "green thing," "but only such men as have not the seal of God on their foreheads." These locusts, then, are beings of a religious or spiritual nature who can injure men who are not of the spirit and character implied in their having the seal of God on their foreheads. We have already seen who these men are—even true Israelites, genuine Christians, the elect of God, those sealed by the Holy Spirit, and thus created anew in the image of God and of the Lamb. These this Satanic agency cannot hurt. Now, who are the men whom the agency referred to does actually hurt or most fearfully deceive? They are those "who received not the love of the truth that they might be saved": evidently those who had the opportunity of hearing the gospel, or who may have professed to have received the gospel, those in the Church who were not of the Church of Christ. But who are these but the unsealed of the nominal Israel, or all of that Israel but the men who have the seal of God on their foreheads? The same persons, then, are referred to here and in the words of Paul. Now, what of the agencies by which these are respectively hurt or deceived? Here an agency from the abyss. In the words of Paul, "for this cause," or because "they received not the love of the saving truth," or, as here, because they did not become true Israelites, and so were not sealed with the very image of God, "God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie," that "working of error" being previously called a working of Satan; so that the agency is from the abyss. In the two cases, then, the persons hurt or deceived are the same, and the agencies hurting or deceiving are the same; whilst the cause of the difference between those susceptible and those not susceptible of spiritual hurt or deception is the same—the want or the possession of that which constitutes the truly saved or the spiritually sealed of God.

3. The hurt here alluded to, and the spiritual delusion referred to by Paul, are in both cases traced to the same human agency, as they have been above traced to the same Satanic agency, or agency from the abyss. In 2 Thess. ii. 1—12 all is spoken of as, not "a falling away," but "*the* falling away," ἡ ἀποστασία, The Apostasy, that of which Paul adds, "Remember ye not that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?" Now, this apostasy, to be fully developed afterwards, he describes as already begun—at least the spirit of it was then at work. But, as the falling away or apostasy was of the Church, this evil spirit, this originating cause,

was within the Church. For our purpose it is enough to point to this. However, we may refer to what clearly shows what Paul actually dreaded as the delusive and perverting power. In his address to the bishops or elders of the Church of Ephesus, who came, at his request, to meet him at Miletus, he most faithfully warned them as to the future, and said, "I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them."

Thus was Paul, in this address, as in his words to the Thesalonians, fearful as to the future, and more fearful of the teachers, the bishops or elders, than of the taught—of the shepherds than of the flock. Now, what do we find here? The whole is traced to "a star from heaven fallen unto the earth." Such a star is totally different from that described as falling on the rivers and fountains, falling from the heavens over the land, and falling just as he was before. This is a fallen star, one fallen from heaven, and now upon the earth. He has fallen from his proper sphere. He has ceased to be heavenly, and begun to be earthly. In treating of the first chapter of this Book, we were led to contemplate the stars in the hand of the Head of the Church as representative of the ministry of the Church, not of any one minister or bishop, but of the entire ministry of bishops or elders, and whatever more. That ministry is the ministry of the kingdom of heaven, and is heavenly. The fall of such a ministry to the earth would imply that it had ceased to act in its purely spiritual and Christian sphere, and begun to act in an earthly or worldly sphere instead. The temptation of Satan, "All these things," the world and its glory, "will I give, if thou wilt fall down and worship me," if thou wilt leave the service of God and enter my service, the service of the world, has been countless times presented to the ministry of Christ since it was addressed to the Master, and too often with the saddest effect. A spiritually fallen ministry may become a mighty worldly, seductive, perverting power. Such we suppose this star to be. The ministry of the Church of Rome, at the time here referred to, especially the chief bishop, displayed, as we have seen, the most towering worldly ambition to become the chief bishop of the entire Church of every land. A fearful success was the result. The imperial barrier was removed. The removal of the Emperor was the advent of the Pope.

4. This very restraining power we find referred to in the next vision—nay, referred to as removed in wonderful keeping with what

we have just been saying. So many interpreters have so totally misconceived the allusion there made to "the great river Euphrates," that this could hardly, we might say, could not possibly, have occurred to their minds. By taking the Euphrates literally, and not symbolically, they have been so led to think of the rise of some mighty power in the East, or in some way closely connected with that river,—even Mohammedanism, with all its terrible ravages and deadly power over a large part of the regions occupied by the Christians of the East,—that their minds have been completely and for ages diverted from the real Euphrates intended, and so from the real Babylon of the Apocalypse, whose river that was, and the waters of whose river, the waters on which the symbolic Babylon is said to sit, are described as (chap. xvii. 15) "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues," thus showing how well all is described under the name given, "the great river Euphrates," a name vastly more appropriate to it than to the literal river which misinterpretation has so greatly misplaced in the vision referred to. Therefore, if the Babylon, the mystic Babylon, is to be found in the West, as all these interpreters maintain, then the mystic river of that Babylon must be found in the West also. What is the consequence? What we find said of this Euphrates we must regard as said of the West: and if, as all these interpreters hold, this mystic Babylon is to be identified with Rome—we by no means say the mere or literal city of Rome—then the Euphrates, or all "peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues" represented by the waters of that river, must be found in the West, and in some way under the authority and power of that Rome which they admit, or rather positively hold, to be mystically meant.

This error of interpretation has entirely concealed the most important and most mysterious statement made under the sixth trumpet: "Loose the four angels which are bound at the great river Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed, which had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, that they should kill the third part of men." This, as applied to the literal Euphrates, appears to be without any real or known meaning. Applied to Rome, the meaning is most simple and striking. The restraint is here recognised, and said to be removed. The restrained forces of evil, the angels bound, are set at liberty, the full development of the previously restrained powers of the apostasy, referred to by Paul, have free scope, and the terrible agency traced to Satan rises to the full height of its power.

5. One of these proofs we might have treated as really two. We have simply traced the evils referred to here, and in the words of

Paul, to the agency of Satan ; but in both cases they are traced to a specially strong delusion sent by God Himself. This is expressly declared by Paul, who speaks of "those who love not the truth" as dealt with by God, who, on this very account, and doubtless as a judicial act, "sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie." So here, "It was said unto them that they should not hurt . . . but only such men as have not the seal of God," or, as Paul says, "who love not the truth that they may be saved." There can be no doubt that what was thus said to them must have been by God Himself, as no one else could effectually cause them to make such a difference between the sealed and the unsealed. The delusion, then, in both instances, is traced to the act, doubtless the judicial act, of God.

6. *Ver.* 1. "And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fallen from heaven unto the earth ; and there was given to him the key of the pit of the abyss."

We have regarded this star as a fallen Christian minister or ministry. It may be well to add that we do not suppose any one minister or any ministry of one generation only, but a succession of ministers or a continuous ministry of some one special sphere ; just as the kings or kingdoms symbolised by the different parts of Nebuchadnezzar's image mean successions of kings and kingdoms during the ages of their prosperity as well as of their fall. Here the ministry intended is said to have a tremendous mysterious power for evil, power to open the abyss, power to let loose a countless host of evil agents, with Satan himself as their king. If, as we have been pointing out, we have here, under another symbolic form, the very rise of that terrible evil power called "the beast from the abyss," in thus acting as king, he, in one way at least, and as elsewhere said, "gives his power to the beast"; he raises to new life and power the beast whose head was wounded to death, and yet afterwards lived, and that as "the beast from the abyss." In what sense can we suppose any Christian minister or ministry thus fallen to have such an awful power? It may be hard or even impossible to say. At any rate, the power wielded may be due to the fact that, whilst really fallen, the minister or ministry still externally occupied the wonted place of influence and power within the nominal Christian Church. So Paul supposes those to do of whom he forewarned the ministers of the Ephesian Church.

We must not suppose, as some have done, that here there is a reference to the assumed power of opening or shutting by the granting or withholding absolution by the priests of Rome. The

power is one to open, not one to shut—nay, a power so to open as never again to have the power to shut—a power so to set evil going as not to have the power to stop it. The reference is not to Hades, the place of the dead, but to the abyss, the abode of the great deceiver. Perhaps we may the better understand what is here meant by this power to open, by considering what is meant by the power to shut this same abyss, as set forth in chap. xx. 1—3: “And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, . . . the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and cast him into the abyss, and shut [it], and sealed [it] over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years should be finished: after this he must be loosed for a little time.” To take this literally and not symbolically, as has been done, and that by those who understand the opening by the fallen star or antichristian minister or ministry, not literally but symbolically, is to treat inconsistently the real design of both. In both cases Satan is regarded as the great deceiver of mankind. The binding and shutting up of Satan are intended to prevent him from using his delusive power; and may fairly be regarded as simply symbolic of the prevention of the exercise of this power to deceive. Whatever God may use to prevent this, virtually and effectually banishes Satan from the sphere of successful deception, virtually and effectually limits him to his own sphere or imprisons him in his own dark abode.

The chain, said to bind, naturally symbolises that power which curbs or destroys his power to deceive. Now, what is that power but the power of gospel truth, by which “the Son” makes free, “free indeed,” from the very bondage of “sin,” and so of Satan. Just in proportion as men are under the influence of the light and truth of Christ, are they beyond the reach of the errors and delusions of Satan. To them, and in that proportion, Satan is so bound and shut up, that he cannot reach them and they need not fear him. In fact, the absence of Christ means the presence of Satan, and the presence of Christ means the absence of Satan. The delusion of Satan and the illumination of Christ are the two opposites: wherever the former continues, the latter is wanting, and wherever the latter enters, waxes brighter and brighter, and rises to completeness, the former is limited, becomes less and less influential, and entirely disappears. After the thousand years Satan is to be loosed for a little season, the abyss, as under this trumpet, is to be opened, the deceptive power is once more to be

wielded, the nations, falling away from the faith, or becoming less under the light of Jesus Christ, are to form a new antichristian power, and for a little time to persecute the true Israel and to assail their very capital, "the beloved city," "the New Jerusalem" afterwards described. Here we have what resembles this and contrasts with the previous shutting up of Satan for the vast period symbolically represented as "the thousand years."

Now, whatever power was able or was permitted to pervert the gospel, or darken the light of Christ, would thus, in the symbolic language here used, have power to let Satan loose or to use the key in opening the abyss. Let another gospel, and yet not another, that is, no true gospel at all, be preached and widely disseminated; and men are prepared to receive all kinds of spiritual or religious and moral error, prepared to welcome all the errors and delusions of the devil; and thus he may be said to escape from his prison and to go forth to deceive and destroy all merely nominal Christians, as he is here said to do, or to deceive the nations at large, as he is said to do in the twentieth chapter. Such we would understand to be the power here assigned to this fallen star. Just such a star, a mighty perverted Christian minister or succession of ministers, or continuous Christian ministry at work for some lengthened period, could do what seems here symbolised; and, as we have said, the retention of a high and most influential place in the externally growing and internally decaying Church of Christ would give a power which could not otherwise be wielded, and which any great minister or ministry justly condemned and excommunicated as heretical could not retain or long exert.

The whole of this might be illustrated and confirmed by the modes of expression used by Christ and to be found in the Gospel of John, chap. viii. 23: "And He said unto them,"—the Pharisees contending with Him,—*"Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world."* Thus, to be of this world and to be from beneath are equivalent, as are also to be from above and not to be of this world. So Jesus elsewhere speaks of Himself as coming down from heaven, and as coming from God. So, too, He speaks of the same contending persons, *"Ye are of your father the devil."* All those, then, who oppose and reject Christ, are declared to be from beneath and of their father the devil. Of His disciples He says (John xvii. 16), *"They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world";* therefore virtually from above, as He was from above—from God, as He was from God. In like manner, Babylon, the false Church, is from beneath or from the

abyss; and the New Jerusalem, the true Church, from above or from heaven. Accordingly, to make a man to be no longer from beneath, but to be from above, a power, the power of the Holy Spirit, has simply to be used to lead that man to Christ, or to receive the gospel, and so to be born again, born from above, born of God. So, to make a Church, once full of faith and true Christian or Divine life, to be no more from above or from heaven, but from beneath or from the abyss, all that is needed is just most sadly to pervert it and allow it to lose that Divine life, or to make "the Holy One of Israel" cease to be "in the midst of it."

All is thus simple. By means of a perverted gospel, a perverted powerful minister or ministry has just to succeed in turning away the minds and hearts from Christ of a multitude of the professing Christian people, and the real work is done: Satan regains his seemingly lost power; the door of his prison-house is opened, and he comes forth with all his lying wonders to deceive those who have ceased to possess the light in the midst of which he cannot wield his deceptive power, or even so much as live. Now, as in this case a perverted Christian ministry is said to open the abyss, the natural inference is that the deceiver had been previously shut up, and by the same power as it is said in chap. xx. he is to be shut up during the thousand years of gospel light and salvation: that is to say, that here Satan is contemplated as cast down by the preaching of the gospel during the period of the Church's early purity and prosperity, and just in proportion to that purity and prosperity, or so long as the Christian ministry remained faithful to Christ and His gospel of heavenly light and salvation. Now, that ministry, or a powerful part of it, becomes faithless, darkens the counsel of God, spreads spiritual darkness and death far and near, and thus reopens what had been shut, just as some such evil power is destined to reopen what has been shut during the long millennial period.

7. *Ver. 2.* "And he opened the pit of the abyss; and there went up a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit."

We are apt to think that such an opening, though a symbolic act, must be simply an act which may be done in a very short time, and done once for all. However, it may fairly represent a long series of acts, and that during a long period of time. So the smoke here represented as so great, so dense, and so dark, as to resemble that of a great furnace, and as to be able to darken the sun and the air, may seem to be the immediate result of one great act; and yet, on

the principle to which we have again and again referred—that in all the visions, objects are made to rise to view at once, and in their full or maximum development, that which is symbolised by this smoke may have taken ages to come to its full height. Both the gradual opening of the pit and the increasing outcome of the smoke are pointed to by Paul when he speaks of “the mystery of lawlessness” as at work in his or in apostolic times. When, after many ages, the working of this mysterious power, or rather evil spirit within the Church, has come to a height, “the lawless one,” “the beast from the abyss” of this Book, will appear, “whose coming is, according to the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit in unrighteousness for them that are perishing,” even for the unsealed, whom alone the deceived and deceitful beings symbolised by these locusts have any power to hurt. Those who had the seal of God on their foreheads were so enlightened by the truth and Spirit of Christ that they could not be perverted and injured by the fearful religious errors and delusions here symbolised by this terrible smoke rising from the abyss, or traceable to the working of Satanic power. If we thus regard these errors and delusions of the corrupt, perverted Church of Christ, then the sun and the air said to be darkened might be supposed to represent Christ and that vital air or spiritual atmosphere which is peculiar to the Christian Church,—though we must not press beyond bounds every expression so used into the service of a minute and overdone interpretation, when, as in the case of “the great sword” of the second seal, no more may be intended than the more powerfully to set forth the greatness of the evil symbolised.

8. *Vcr.* 3. “And out of the smoke came forth locusts upon the earth; and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power.”

This seems to mean that they had power to hurt and to cause pain and intense suffering, as the natural scorpion has power to sting and to create such suffering. They, as it were, infuse poison into the spiritual veins, destructive of all mental peace, creative of intense spiritual uneasiness and perplexity. Whatever they are, these locusts are said to “come out of the smoke upon the earth.” Whether the smoke is simply to be viewed as their “vehicle or envelope,” as Alford expresses it, or as that in which, and so far by which, they are bred and developed, it might be difficult to decide. We rather incline to the latter view: that, after the spread of much error throughout the Christian Church, very many, influenced by that error or by the many errors and delusions intended, should become agents

of evil, misleading multitudes and creating all the pain and suffering due to religious darkness and error. Mr. Elliott, like not a few others, regards this and the next trumpets as setting forth the rise and progress and terrible devastations of the Mohammedan religion. Mohammed he would make the star fallen from heaven to the earth because of his royal ancestry. So far as certain parts of this vision are concerned, they might doubtless appear favourable to this view. However, the whole vision seems clearly to refer to the fearful corruption of the Christian Church and the rise of the antichristian system, which is set forth fully and in various forms in the chapters which follow. The fact, to which we have more than once alluded as a main proof of this, seems perfectly sufficient to overthrow the whole Mohammedan theory. The locusts were not to hurt true Christians; whilst the Mohammedan soldiers killed all indiscriminately, we might say the true and faithful especially, who would not abandon Christ for the new and false prophet of Arabia. Further, the army or agency represented by the locusts did not kill, but greatly tormented; whilst the soldiers or followers of the Prophet killed rather than thus greatly tormented. To a very great extent the arguments in favour of Islam are far-fetched and without foundation.

9. *Vers. 4-6.* "And it was said unto them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree, but only such men as have not the seal of God on their foreheads. And it was given them that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when it striketh a man. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall in no wise find it; and they shall desire to die, and death fleeth from them."

The fact that they were not to hurt the grass or any green thing, whatever more, at least means that they were no locusts at all. The locusts symbolised a terrible spiritual agency. The unsealed, the mere professing Christian, was to suffer in some way most grievously. No one, living in the enjoyment of such peace and hope as even the partial knowledge of Christ and His gospel usually gives, can be led far astray from his past beliefs without falling into a state of perplexity and suffering. What was said of Jehovah may here be used of Jesus Christ—"Their sorrows shall be multiplied that exchange (the true Saviour) for another." Such an exchange would lead to such a result; but the sorrows would not be endured by those of the transition period alone, but would descend from generation to generation, as in the case of every false or pagan religion. No one can tell the sorrows of heathendom, or, of what is

a real part of heathendom, even paganised or heathenised Christendom. How fearful a source of anxiety, perplexity, and "torment," the sense of unpardoned or even of doubtfully pardoned sin! The history of the middle ages, the history of oriental heathenism, all religious history, need only to be called to mind, if we would see the force of the descriptive words before us. What have not men done in the way of sacrifice, of self-torture and the like, to make atonement for their sins, and, if possible, to get peace to their minds! The idea of a scorpion, with its terrible sting, is introduced to set forth the excruciating nature of the suffering intended.

What is really meant by "the five months," to which the torment is said to extend, may be hard to determine. Some have supposed a period of 150 years; the five months of thirty days each being equal to 150 days; and these days again, according to the year-day theory, representing 150 years. However, whether that theory may or may not be rightly applied to certain portions of this Book, we can see no way in which it can be here of any avail. Some, again, suppose a reference to the five months during which locusts continue in a state of activity and destructiveness. We think this is most likely intended; but we do not therefore conclude that the entire plague is thus to be limited to some such short time, or that we are to search through the pages of history for some period of awful human suffering which might seem to correspond to the description here given. The words have been misunderstood. It is not said that the woe is to last a short time. It is said that the men are to suffer hurt from the locusts for "five months." The locusts are to hurt men for five months in such a way that they shall feel as if stung by a scorpion. The locusts are afterwards said to have tails like unto scorpions, and stings, and in their tails is their power to hurt men five months. This implies that this power to sting and to hurt is to continue five months—that is to say, during the whole active life of the natural locusts, and consequently during the whole life or activity of the agency symbolised by them, or as long as the unsealed continue under the pernicious influence of that agency, or during their entire lives.

This is quite in keeping with what immediately follows: "*And in those days,*"—not in those months,—"*shall men seek death,*"—doubtless as an escape from the torments spoken of,—"*and shall in no wise find it; and they shall desire to die, and death fleeth from them.*" This seems fully to imply that these torments continue to the end of life. As the sealed or true Israel do not thus suffer, or cannot be thus afflicted, the real distinction between those who

possess true peace of mind through a living faith in Christ, and those who, because destitute of that faith, or because influenced by a system which gives no such peace, but creates all anxiety and terror, even up to a wish for death itself, will suggest the true import of these awful words. We have already pointed to that distinction. Both sealed and unsealed may be thoroughly awakened to a sense of the awful consequences of sin. The sealed believe that they are fully and freely forgiven through Christ; the unsealed are kept under the fear of these consequences. Perverted or paganised Christianity keeps up the sense of sin and the terror of the consequences of sin, gives no adequate assurance of Divine forgiveness, but interposes between Christ and the sinner an agency which hides the one all-sufficient Saviour, and presumptuously takes His place, and provides, by all the forms and conditions of absolution, no satisfactory peace, no such restored union with Christ and with God as can inspire true life, sustain a joyful hope, and give a full and present sense of eternal salvation.

10. *Vers. 7-11.* "And the shapes of the locusts (were) like unto horses prepared for war; and upon their heads as it were crowns like unto gold, and their faces were as men's faces. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as (the teeth) of lions. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to war. And they have tails like unto scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men five months. They have over them as king the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek (tongue) he hath the name Apollyon."

These words clearly prove that the allusion here made is not to the Egyptian plague of locusts, but to the invasion of the land of Israel for the punishment of national departure from Jehovah, as predicted by Joel, to whose words we have already referred. "For a nation is come up upon My land, strong and without number; his teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the jaw-teeth of a great lion. . . . A great people and a strong, there hath not been ever the like. . . . The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses. . . . Like the noise of chariots on the tops of the mountains do they leap . . . as a strong people set in battle array . . . the sun and the moon are darkened . . . the Lord uttereth His voice before His great army. . . . Yet even now, saith the Lord, turn ye unto Me . . . I will remove far from you the northern (army), and will drive him into a land barren and desolate." Jehovah calls this strong nation His army, because He used it for the chastisement of His rebellious

people. On their repentance He engages to withdraw it and to restore prosperity to them. The vision before us is evidently parallel to this. The Christian Church or Christian Israel had, in like manner, departed from the Saviour-King. A terrible enemy, only in the midst of them, rises up terribly to afflict. The vision of Joel relates to a time long after Israel had been divinely redeemed from Egypt and settled in the land of Canaan. The vision of John relates to a like period, or to a time long after the redemptive work of Christ, when the Church had greatly increased in numbers, and yet, like Israel, had fearfully departed from the Great Deliverer. In both cases, the locusts are said to have "the teeth of lions." In both cases also, their appearance is like that of horses; whilst their noise is like that of chariots. Nay, in both the sun is said to be darkened. Of course there are several marked differences; still the method of interpreting the vision of Joel should help towards the proper method of interpreting the vision of John.

One thing, at least, we ought to learn—namely, that we should not expect to be able to attach some special meaning to every detail of the picture. Thus, we have referred to the darkening of the sun by the smoke as possibly referring either to the obscuration of the Sun of the Church, or Christ Himself, by the many errors and delusions symbolised by the smoke, or simply to give a more powerful representation of the density of the smoke or of the greatness of the errors and delusions intended. Now, here in Joel, the darkening of the sun is simply referred to in order to set forth the greatness of the evil to be endured, and in this way we are taught caution in the interpretation of all such details, lest we add fancies of our own to what alone may be really meant.

"*And the shapes of the locusts (were) like unto horses prepared for war.*" This is regarded by some as simply expressive of actual fact. Be it so. We have no doubt more is meant. The idea seems clearly to be, that those symbolised were, as in the vision of Joel, a great and a strong people, an army prepared for a terrible contest. "*And upon their heads as it were crowns like unto gold.*" Those who hold that the Mohammedan soldiery are intended suppose this to represent the turban of the East. They seem here to substitute fancy for fact. The latter clause, "like unto gold," appears clearly to mean, not a golden band or ornament of gold, nor any merely yellow band, but what appeared really golden but yet was not of gold. By some these crowns are thought to be so far characteristic of the natural locust. Once more, be it so. Still the description is evidently intended for a symbolic purpose. The

beings symbolised seem clearly to profess to be what they are not. They are professedly kings or priests or conquerors. Now, as they are in the vision set forth as actually conquerors, the natural conclusion is that they profess to be either kings or priests. This falls in with what is said of them as deceivers, as hurting the unsealed or non-elect by such deception as cannot mislead the elect or sealed.

"*And their faces were as men's faces.*" Here the Mussulman soldiers are held to be meant, as if a reference were made to the moustache of the Arabs. This is surely fanciful and far-fetched. Far more natural is the idea, that manly courage and intelligence are to be understood. "*And they had hair as the hair of women.*" This is said to be so far distinctive of the natural locust. It is also said to indicate the licentiousness of the East. This, too, seems to be without reason inferred from the symbol. What more simple or natural than that they seemed to possess all the gentler virtues and manners of women thus added to the more masculine properties just referred to? When it is fully proved that this vision relates to an antichristian order of priests or clergy, the appropriateness of both symbols will appear. "*And their teeth were as (the teeth) of lions.*" Whilst seemingly endowed with all manly and womanly excellences, they had the teeth, and so the very nature and heart of lions. This is specially in keeping with what has been pointed out, that in this vision we are led to see the rise of the wild beast from the abyss afterwards spoken of.

"*And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron.*" They appeared fully equipped for war, and seemed perfectly invulnerable. They could fearfully injure, but they could not be vitally injured. Than this we know of nothing more which we can safely draw from this symbol. "*And the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to war.*" Both in Joel and here, this is doubtless intended rather to heighten the idea of the locust-army, than to suggest any likeness between the symbol and the symbolised, unless, at least, in so far as multitude, fury, resistless power, eagerness for the destructive work, are all suggested as characteristic of this terrible host from the abyss. Alford has well brought out the full meaning of the words, "'Of chariots of many horses' (by the two genitives the sound of both, the chariots and horses, is included). The chariots are regarded as an appendage to the horses." "*And they have tails like unto scorpions, and stings.*" In the words of Alford, "(i.e. to the tails of scorpions: the construction called the *comparatio compendiaria*)

. . . *and stings* (viz. in their tails: this is the particular especially in which the comparison finds its aptitude)." "This made," says Barnes, "the locusts which appeared to John the more remarkable; for, though the fancy may imagine a resemblance between the tail of a locust and that of a scorpion, yet the locusts have properly no sting."

This illustrates the correctness of the way in which we have been treating these details. Instead of seeking to find something characteristic of the locust in all these representations, we have regarded them rather as symbolically expressive of what is intended by them. Thus the tails of the natural locusts and scorpions need not at all resemble each other, and yet the meaning, instead of being obscured, will only become the more clear and expressive, —nay, the different parts of a complex symbol may be even discordant, or incapable of co-existence, without affecting the true meaning of the whole. Symbol may be so added to symbol, that, in order to see the one we must suppose some other to have become invisible or to have passed away from the picture. Thus, if we may allude to the most sacred of all these symbolic representations, we must, as it were, cease to contemplate the face of the Royal High Priest as shining like the sun in the height of his strength, before we can so much as suppose the other symbols visible, the sword from His mouth, the hair of greatest whiteness, or the eyes as a flame of fire. Here the idea is simply that of the creation of the intensest pain, which could not be more fitly or expressively represented than as it is here—" *And in their tails is their power to hurt men five months.*" We have already referred to this. Perhaps the article should have been here retained,—"*the men,*"—not men in general, but the men expressly mentioned as those whom they could hurt, namely, the unsealed Christians or unreal Israelites.

"*They have over them as king the angel of the abyss: his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek (tongue) he hath the name Apollyon.*" We have here, in reality, the kingdom of darkness, with the great destroyer, as the name implies, or the prince of darkness, at its head, restored where it seemed to have been overthrown and swept away by the Prince of light and life, the Conqueror on the white horse of chap. vi. What a transformation! An army of light and truth become an army of darkness and error—the army of Christ turned into an army of Satan! Such is the real result of what is here symbolised, the rise and development of the antichristian system, the restoration of Paganism or the paganisa-

tion of Christianity and the Christian Church, the kingdom of the beast of more than one subsequent chapter. To borrow from Dean Alford, "Abaddon (אָבַדּוֹן , *perdition*, from אָבַד , *perish*, is used in the Old Testament for the place of perdition, *Orcus*, Job xxvi. 6; Prov. xxvii. 20). In all these places the LXX. express it by ἀπώλεια. So that this is the local name personified, or rather, perhaps, that abstract name personified from which the local import itself is derived. . . . *Apollyon* (the name ἀπολλύων seems chosen from the LXX. ἀπώλεια). . . . It is a question who this angel of the abyss is. Perhaps for accurate distinction's sake we must not identify him with Satan himself . . . but must regard him as one of the principal of the bad angels." We hardly think this correct. The vision is intended to set forth the Satanic origin of the agency represented, and afterwards identified with the beast from the abyss. Everywhere in this Book Satan appears as the great antagonist of Christ. Here he appears to escape from his prison, as in chap. xx. he is said to be once more imprisoned. And, in fine, Satan is really all in all in the picture drawn by Paul of the great apostasy, which, we think, we have given sufficient reasons for identifying with this vision and that of the sixth trumpet.

11. *Ver. 12.* "The first woe is past: behold, there come yet two woes hereafter."

These words suggest the idea of succession, as if the one woe had fully come and fully passed away before the other so much as even partially appeared. However, this need not be supposed. It was necessary to set them forth in succession in order to show their real character or to define them as distinct from one another. In some sense certainly, and to some extent, the one really followed the other. Unless for the first, the second could not really come at all. We think this will afterwards appear. Beyond this we do not think the idea of succession should be carried. They began at different times, but they ran on together, and as two concurrent streams, during a great part of their existence. The first, then, being set forth in the vision of the fifth trumpet, a voice proclaims, "The first woe is past." The fearful development of the mighty agency has been effected. But it is far from intended to indicate that that agency had ceased to exist or to exercise its dreadful perverting power. How long that power would continue it is not said. The two remaining woes would come forth in due course. As the first would take a long time for its development, the second would do the same; and long before the former would reach its maximum,

it might do an immense amount of deceptive and destructive work in the gradual development of the second, which we find described as, like this, at its maximum strength in the next vision. The words here used do not prevent us from taking this view of the woes as at once partially successive and partially contemporaneous, and throughout closely connected as in an emphatic sense parts of one great whole. This will be seen as we advance.

It has been said (Webster and Wilkinson) that "the events under the sixth trumpet are too closely connected in character and origin with those of the fifth to be considered a separate or 'the second woe.' Nor is the announcement 'the second woe is past' (xi. 14) connected at all with the events of the sixth trumpet. It immediately follows the close of a prediction of the tyranny and persecution and incipient downfall of Papal Rome (xi. 7—13). 'The second woe' is the Papal, or, as Milton terms it, 'the Babylonian woe.'" On this we simply observe that it points distinctly, as above, to the close connection of the two visions. Further, it also, as we have been doing, points to Papal Rome. But it fails to do what we think ought to have been done, namely, to show that all that lies between the vision of the sixth trumpet and the words "the second woe is past," stands in some similar relation of connection, if not of identity under different forms, to the fifth and sixth trumpets, as the visions of the seventh chapter do to those of the preceding six seals. Only the careful study of what intervenes between the announcements of the first and second woes can convince of the truth of this. There are three woes; but they all relate to the rise and progress, the reign and downfall, of one and the same antichristian system.

THE SIXTH TRUMPET.

1. *Vers. 13-15.* "And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the horns of the golden altar which is before God, one saying to the sixth angel, which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound at the great river Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed which had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, that they should kill the third part of men."

We cannot but say that not a little difficulty attends the clear and satisfactory interpretation of this vision. By very many expositors it has hitherto been regarded as relating to the rise of Mohammedanism, with its most frightful ravages and destruction of human life. The fact that the Euphrates is here introduced has led them to think of the East and not of the West, of the

Mohammedan rather than of the Papal kingdoms. Nor was this unnatural. They were familiar with the fact of the simultaneous rise of what may be called the two great and terrible antichristian systems, Eastern and Western, destined to do the most deadly work within the regions occupied by the Eastern and Western Churches. Though the Euphrates was somewhat distant from Mecca, and though the great city built on its banks had long ceased to suggest any likely rise of any mighty power in any way connected with it, the great prophet of Islam had taken so strong a hold on the minds and imaginations of all most familiar with his history, and that of his numerous, cruel and most warlike followers, that, as we have said, it was natural to apply this vision, which might be called the Euphratean vision, to him and the terrible hosts of warriors who went forth, fearless of death, to propagate his religion by the power of the sword.

Yet we think that this view of the vision is erroneous, and destined to give place to another and more suitable. The great mistake has been that of confounding the literal with the mystic river. The literal Babylon of ancient prophecy had passed away; a new or mystic Babylon of this New Testament prophecy had in some real sense taken its place. As the literal Babylon was addressed by Jeremiah, "O thou that dwellest upon many waters," mystic Babylon is described, chap. xvii. 1, as one "that sitteth upon many waters"; so that, as the many waters of the literal Euphrates are alluded to in the former case, the many waters of the mystic Euphrates cannot but be referred to in the latter. And what is meant by these mystic or symbolic waters we are expressly told (chap. xvii. 15): "And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the harlot sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." No wonder, accordingly, that the river, whose waters symbolise all these, should be called the Great River Euphrates. The vast army immediately afterwards spoken of is thus to be regarded as the army of all these numerous and different peoples. The four angels bound at the great river represent this army; so that, when they are loosed, this army is set free and goes on to do its dreadful work. We do not like to anticipate, and yet it may be well to say that this seems fully confirmed by the corresponding allusion to the Euphrates under the sixth vial or bowl of the sixteenth chapter, where we are told that "the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river, the (river) Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way might be made ready for the kings that (come) from the sunrising,"—words which seem most simple when read in the

light of the view which we have given, but which, we venture to say, will never receive a satisfactory meaning so long as the literal river continues to occupy the place of the expressly declared mystic one, or that of the many peoples on which mystic Babylon sits. In the case of the trumpet, the river is full mystically of these peoples. In the case of the bowl, the same river is "dried up," or these numerous peoples, the support of mystic Babylon, are to become few and incapable of yielding her protection against coming and destined assaults. This, we are told, will make ready the way for the kings from the sunrising. The way to what, or for what? What but the way into the city, the mystic Babylon, just as the drying up of the literal river prepared the way for the kings of the Medes and Persians entering the literal Babylon. The hosts of revived Israel, symbolised by the hosts of those kings of the East, when mystic Babylon has lost the aid of these multitudinous peoples, symbolised by the waters of the mystic Euphrates, will overthrow the unholy city or destroy the antichristian system represented by her, or rather destroy the Church of the apostasy and build anew the true Jerusalem or Church of Apostolic Christianity. Thus we seem to have at least one key to the true meaning of this vision.

(1) *"I heard a voice from the horns of the golden altar which is before God."* The veil being withdrawn from between the Holy and Most Holy Place, this altar within the former is said to be before God, who is supposed to sit upon the mercy-seat which was within the latter. Being the altar of incense, emblematic of prayer, this voice would seem to be in response to the supplications of the suffering saints of Jesus Christ. How the removal of the restraint referred to should be in answer to such supplications, we may not be able with certainty to say. Why should the true followers of Christ pray in such a way as to lead to the unloosing of the previously bound or restrained armies of Antichrist, as, according to the above view of the mystic waters, these armies really are? We know of no proper answer but that already suggested as to the restraint here alluded to. We supposed here a reference to the restraining power of imperial Rome over the free action of the Antichrist or man of sin of the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians. Now, the prayers of the persecuted Christians involved prayers for the downfall of Pagan and persecuting Rome, and thus indirectly for the removal of this very restraint. When these prayers were offered, this great army was rising up; and when they were answered, the restraint was removed, the four angels were loosed, and the great army came forth.

(2) "*One saying to the sixth angel, which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound at the great river Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed, which had been prepared for the hour, and day, and month, and year, that they should kill the third part of men.*" We have said, these angels represent the warlike horsemen, and are simply to be viewed as having such command of them, as the angel with the trumpet had over themselves. They are said to be prepared for the hour, and day, and month, and year, by which we do not suppose is meant a period equal to the sum of these times, but that a special exact time is intended—still such an exact time viewed symbolically, exact for the end in view, but longer or shorter according to the nature of that end or purpose. The delusions of Satan and of the great apostasy are not only revealed as terrible evils in themselves, but are expressly said to be sent of God as a judicial punishment inflicted on those who "received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error,"—and, if so, He may be justly said to send them, as the natural consequence of that wide-spread error, such an army of deluded men as this vision sets before us, and as these four angels represent. The judicial infliction is very great. They were to kill a third part or a great part of men. As the armies immediately alluded to are said to do the same thing, to kill a third part of men, we see that we have not erred in identifying the four angels with these almost countless hosts of darkness and destruction.

2. *Ver. 16.* "And the number of the armies of the horsemen (or of the horsemen of the armies) was twice ten thousand times ten thousand : I heard the number of them."

Naturally the last clause would suggest that the real number was here given. Nor is there any objection to this, provided we remember that it is the number of the symbolic army, and not that of the literal army symbolised by it. The true idea seems to be that of an immense number. There may be symbolic hyperbole as well as rhetorical. There never was an army in this world numerically comparable to this, of no less than 200,000,000 of horsemen ; yet, taken symbolically and viewed as intended to fill the imagination with the thought of tremendous power, we do not know a better mode of expression than that here used—"twice ten thousand times ten thousand." This will commend itself the more, if we consider the nature or character of these terrible horsemen. They represent the entire nations and peoples under the sway of the antichristian powers, if we interpret aright. Amongst such peoples all adult

males are soldiers. In the case before us, if an army of religious propagandists is intended, the entire population, women as well as men, must be included. So we must conclude with respect to the great army described in chap. xix. as led by the great Warrior on the white horse and with many diadems on His head, and by which this very army is to be met and fully overthrown. Christ and all Christians, if we may so put it, are to meet and finally to conquer Antichrist and all antichristians. The armies, therefore, on both sides are made up, literally as well as symbolically, of many millions of people. At the same time these armies include many generations. We are apt to think that, because the symbol is of such terrible appearance, the reality must be the same. This may by no means be the case. One who can and does exert some simple unnoticeable power to deceive, and so to destroy, might be one of the meanest and feeblest in a physical point of view among men; and yet, if symbolically represented, to show forth the fearful result of yielding to his influence, would appear in the form of some frightful monster of subtlety and cruelty.

3. *Ver. 17.* "And thus I saw the horses of the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates (as) of fire and of hyacinth and of brimstone: and the heads of the horses are as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths proceedeth fire and smoke and brimstone."

The remark just made as to symbolic representation will help towards the understanding of this and of many another awful form under which what may seem very simple and even innocent may be set forth. So we find in the case of the wild beasts from the sea and from the earth. A false prophet may appear and act in the person of one of apparently the most simple and sincere, the most amiable and agreeable of men. The wild beast from the earth, chap. xiii. 11, with "two horns like unto a lamb," but not like the true Lamb, "spake as a dragon," a cruel monster, and symbolised "the false prophet," a man or succession of men who might be of the most highly cultured of the unsealed, only deceiving and being deceived. We have certainly a dreadful description of this army of horsemen. We have above identified it with the army or armies met and overthrown by the many-diademed Conqueror and His armies, "the armies of heaven," as these may be called the armies of the abyss.

This, we think, may be proved thus. We have identified the evil or Satanic agency of the preceding vision with the beast from the pit. But the beast and his armies are those opposed by the great Conqueror. Now, the armies of which we treat are evidently con-

needed with the Satanic agency of the preceding vision. Further as the armies of the peoples represented by the waters of the Euphrates, and therefore the peoples by whom the mystic Babylon is supported, are the peoples ruled with their armies by the beast, we need not wonder at the terrible description. They are those influenced, hurt, deceived, inspired with a Satanic spirit by the agency from the abyss. They are no mere soldiers of fortune or of the world. They are soldiers of a false or perverted religion. They are influenced by the fury and cruelty of a false system of which they are the fanatical and ruthless propagandists. Thus far they resemble the fanatical and ruthless followers of Mohammed. In both cases we have determined and fearless and furious propagandists of a false and really pagan faith, who present a very short and expressive alternative to their victims,—Believe or die, or, as it has been less gently put, "Turn or burn." That this cannot be done at all times, and has not everywhere been done, is not proof of error in our interpretation. In both cases it has been done, and done for ages, in a way too awfully illustrative of the propriety of the symbolic description here given. The horsemen had "*breastplates (as) of iron and of hyacinth and of brimstone.*" Some have supposed breastplates simply reflecting the colours of the fire and smoke and brimstone proceeding out of the mouths of their horses, and that the colours find some resemblance to those in use among Mohammedan horsemen. This is simply to set aside all symbolical import. These breastplates are of no earthly manufacture or use. They seem intended to point to this,—that those said to have them are, in the sense at least in which we have explained the expression, "from beneath." The horsemen defend themselves by what comes from beneath, or by means of the spirit and errors and powers with which the agency from the abyss has amply supplied them. A more definite explanation we are unable to offer.

"*And the heads of the horses are as the heads of lions,*"—expressive of courage, ferocity, strength. "*And out of their mouths proceedeth fire and smoke and brimstone.*" Here the horses are the main instruments of destruction. They frantically breathe the spirit of evil. Here horseman and horse seem to be symbolically employed as one mystic agent, and not as two distinct or separate agents. So it is in the case of the locusts of the preceding vision. They had all the attributes of horses and horsemen. What properly belongs to the horseman may thus be symbolically represented as belonging to the horse. What the horseman might have been said to breathe is thus said to be breathed by the horses whose instrumentality they

employ, as if they were parts of themselves. As hinted at, all that which the agency from the abyss would impart, these agents of evil may be said to breathe or to use for the purposes of their warfare of propagandist fraud and force, of spiritual fraud and physical force.

4. *Vers. 18, 19.* "By these three plagues was the third part of men killed, by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone, which proceeded out of their mouths. For the power of the horses is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails are like serpents, and have heads; and with them they do hurt."

Here three distinct plagues or evils are said to be symbolised by the three things spoken of. The extravagant idea has been broached that here we have a reference to the invention of gunpowder and the use of cannon by the Moslems in the taking of Constantinople. When the literal is confounded with the symbolical, or when the symbolical is viewed as literal, all becomes confusion, misunderstanding, extravagance. This has been the source of perhaps the greatest amount of error in the interpretation of this Book. Beyond what we have said, that this army may be supposed to breathe and to use in the terrible warfare whatever inspiration and error the agency from the abyss may have imparted, we are not prepared to make any further suggestion. Though these things are expressly called deadly plagues, neither the number nor the things may have been intended to be taken as more than symbolic of all the deadly powers traceable to the agency from the abyss; and this seems the more likely from what follows,—"*For their tails are like unto serpents, and have heads; and with them they do hurt.*" In this way, symbol after symbol is added throughout this Book, that the full meaning may be expressed, however unnatural the resultant complex whole may appear. Here serpents with heads are added to set forth more fully and terribly the destructive powers intended. The serpent being the symbol of Satan, one might suppose that these were here meant to add the idea of Satanic power. We might here repeat what we have said of the possibility of being led not a little astray by attempting to explain details which were never meant to be explained, and therefore by putting a meaning into them which they were never intended to convey—nay, which may prevent the right interpretation of the whole.

5. *Vers. 20, 21.* "And the rest of the men which were not killed with those plagues, repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils (rather, demons), and the idols of gold

and of silver, and of brass, and of stone, and of wood, which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk : and they repented not of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts."

Here we have certainly what would lead us to think of those referred to as heathen in every sense,—idolaters, sorcerers, and in every way immoral and criminal persons. The Revised translation is in keeping with this idea, as it suggests the idea of mankind at large. However, we prefer the expression, "the rest of the men"; and suppose it to refer to those who are called, chap. viii. 13, "them that dwell on the earth," inclusive, it may be, of the heathen, but specially referring to those who had not the seal of God. In this way, heathenised Christians and all still actually heathen will be intended. This supposition is certainly accompanied with what may appear an insuperable difficulty—namely, that it seems to imply that the agents inflicting the punishment and the persons suffering it were the same, and that therefore repentance could not have been the end of the infliction, nor could impenitence be, as here, spoken of as strange and unexpected. At first sight this objection would seem fatal to the whole view taken of this vision, and favourable to the theory of a reference to Mohammedanism. However, that theory has, we think, been already set aside. We seem to have given sufficient proof that these two woe-trumpets relate to the rise of the beast from the abyss and of the armies of the beast or of the multitudes of peoples expressly said to be signified by the many waters of the Euphrates or river of mystic Babylon.

Nor can there be any objection to this because of the utter heathenism of the persons described, as the corrupt Church or paganised Christendom became far too idolatrous and wicked in every way to come short of the description. As said, the real difficulty lies in the apparent identity of those who inflict and those who suffer the punishment, which failed to lead to the repentance intended. Yet, this difficulty is perhaps more apparent than real. We must not suppose that the armies or peoples of the beast from the abyss, the peoples and armies of Papal and paganised Europe, should all fight on one side, and never against one another. We well know that the head of the paganised Church has had sometimes one kingdom and sometimes another on his side; and that throughout the one vast Papal kingdom, made up of many separate kingdoms, perverted and corrupted religion has been a source of endless strife and measureless bloodshed; so that these two trumpets of the rise of a new paganism in the Church of Christ

on the one hand, and the spread of that paganism among the nations of Europe on the other, cannot be better described than, as here, trumpets of awful woe to the dwellers on the earth.

What, then, of their expected or intended repentance? Might not the terrible evils flowing from the corruption of the Christian religion, the endless wars and crimes, have been sufficient to lead people everywhere to do more than suspect that all was wrong, that the religion taught was not of God, that the new spiritual head of all States as well as of all Churches was not the real Vicar or true representative of the Prince of Peace or Holy One of Israel? Besides, as we shall find by-and-by, the appointed witnesses for Christ and for God, though opposed and persecuted, were not yet silenced or slain, or, if so, had been soon raised out of their death of silence as to their true testimony. Those so fearfully suffering ought, therefore, to have seen that all was spiritually and morally wrong with themselves. Conscience ought to have condemned them for their crimes. Instead of receiving the true and faithful witnesses who were their best friends, they rejoiced over their death, over the silencing of their testimony, and that because these witnesses "tormented them" by telling them the truth. But, whilst this seems to remove the difficulty, it may yet be replied, that it is assumed that this great army was often divided and guilty of mutual slaughter; and it may be asked, will the symbolic description of it fairly admit of any such assumption? That it may, will, we think, fully appear if we turn to a like case of symbolisation. We refer to the red horse and its rider of the second seal, chap. vi. 4: "a red horse; and to him that sat thereon it was given to take peace from the earth." If we read no further, the meaning would seem to be, that this horseman represented some great warlike power or some great army, strong and united, whose commission it was to break up the peace of the rest of the world. But when we read on we find that this is by no means the case, but "that they should slay one another." The same appears in the case before us. This frightful army, or rather these many terrible armies, inflict the sufferings meant, by mutual strife and destruction, as well as by the way in which they seek to fulfil their propagandist mission in the case of those who may have continued literally heathen during at least a long period of the gradual rise of those symbolised hosts. For, we must not forget that the corrupted Christianity of these two trumpets was for ages propagated among the pagan peoples by means of force and fraud. Nor was the conversion of these

peoples a conversion to God, but a conversion from one form of paganism to another—a conversion which, at least, did not lead them to repent of the idolatries and crimes here enumerated.

6. We think, then, that the only interpretation of these visions of the fifth and sixth trumpets is that which we have thus given, according to which the rise of the “man of sin” or the beast from the abyss, and the submission of the countries of Western Christendom to his spiritual and even political sway, are intended. As we have said, the description is by no means too strong to apply to the corrupt Church of the West. We might illustrate this with respect to every particular. Idolatry in many forms obtains to the present day. The idolatrous worship of Mary is no mere thing of the past. If we keep by the right translation, “demons,” and not “devils,” then in the worship of these, or of countless departed and canonised spirits, or of saints departed, we need no new proof of the sickening practice. The sorceries of the “man of sin” have been very many. The crimes referred to require no observations by way of proof. No other mode of interpretation can be made to harmonise with the nature of the visions or with other portions of the Book. The only other, which has long obtained the suffrages of the ablest and most learned commentators, is that to which we have often alluded, and which refers these two visions, or at least the latter, to the followers of Mohammed. Against this enough seems to have been said already.

We shall, however, close with one or two further remarks. *First*, there seems no possible propriety in thus regarding the Euphrates literally, and yet taking the horses, horsemen and the like symbolically. *Secondly*, if the Prophet of Arabia was intended, why go so far eastward for the birthplace and home of his religion? *Thirdly*, almost all this large portion of the Apocalypse is admitted to refer to the Western Church; and why should there be this one foreign subject introduced here and in the sixteenth chapter? *Fourthly*, we may have reason to show afterwards that we should not expect, in connection with this matter, any direct reference to the East or region of the Eastern Church.

7. Whilst we might have expected to find here the announcement of the second woe being past, we find instead more than one important vision previously introduced. This is quite consistent with the idea of this being the second woe-trumpet, as these visions really belong to the same period, and may be called supplementary, as the seventh chapter is to the sixth. We therefore connect them with this.

V.

CHAPTERS X, XI.

I.

CHAPTER X.

THE MIGHTY OATH AND JOHN'S NEW PROPHETIC MISSION.

I. THIS and the next chapter contain visions pertaining to the same period and to the same things as do those of the two woe-trumpets. Hence the announcement of the second woe is postponed till these supplementary visions are introduced, and till the seventh or third woe-trumpet is about to sound. Before the close of these two woes, the agency from the abyss has embodied itself in that head symbolised as a beast, of which we have full proof in what is said of him as slaying or silencing the witnesses spoken of in the next chapter. This tenth chapter may be viewed as in some sense parenthetical, and introductory not only to the disclosures in next chapter relating to the period of the first two woe-trumpets, but also to very much that follows, relating mainly to the reign and fall of the beast, whose rise we have regarded as set forth in the eighth and ninth chapters. From all this we may well infer the appropriateness of the place occupied by this parenthetical and introductory vision of the strong angel standing upon the sea and upon the earth. It should be remembered that the perversion of the gospel and the wide corruption of the Church implied two very sad things—the diminished number of the faithful preachers of the former, and the reduction of the true Church to corresponding weakness and even obscurity. However many genuine followers of Christ might remain within the corrupt Church, their testimony would be put to silence and their very existence would become unknown. As the antichristian system was more and more fully developed, and as both spiritual and political despotism advanced, the true Church would seem, to

many a sad and sorrowful soul, as destined ultimately to perish. He that was against it would often, to faltering faith, appear stronger than He who was for it.

The Conqueror on the white horse, after all His victories over the paganism of imperial Rome, would almost appear to be all but vanquished by the revival of like paganism within the bounds of His own kingdom. At such a time of fearful foreboding on the part of His seemingly few and fainting followers, or on the part of His followers of any time or country, when depressed with the thought of their numerous and mighty foes, intellectually as well as politically, what can better tend to the increase of faith, the inspiration of courage, and the continuance of patient and faithful service, than some clear spiritual vision of the exalted Head of the Church, or much calm meditation on His almighty power and changeless excellency? Here, accordingly, we find a vision of that glorious and Divine Redeemer, of wonderful sublimity, revealing His own glory and power, and showing that it is the eternal decree of the universal Creator, that the apparently victorious enemy in question—nay, that every enemy to the cause and kingdom of Christ—must and shall be put down, and that that cause and kingdom cannot but triumph gloriously, in harmony with the sure word of ancient prophecy, and at the very time appointed by Jehovah, the unchangeable covenant God of Israel.

2. *Vers. 1-3.* "And I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, arrayed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire; and he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left upon the earth; and he cried with a great voice, as a lion roareth; and when he cried, the seven thunders uttered their voices."

We have said that here we have an opportune vision of the great Head of the Church in all the glory of His majesty and power. Some, as Alford, contend that a created angel, a messenger and representative of God, and not our Lord Himself, is intended. There is certainly not a little to favour this in the expression here used, "another strong angel,"—seemingly in allusion to the other "strong angel," chap. v. 2, previously spoken of, and who, with "a great voice," as here, proclaimed, "Who is worthy to open the book?" This angel, again, has an open book in his hand. Both angels might thus seem to be of the same nature, created or uncreated, and not of unlike nature, or the one created and the other uncreated or Divine. This point has led to not a little discussion. Certainly the whole description here given would most naturally

point to Him who is so similarly described in chap. i., His face like the sun, and His feet as pillars of fire. The addition of the cloud and the rainbow is also confirmatory. Especially would the great oath, so like that by which Jehovah, "swearing by Himself, because He could swear by no greater," confirmed the covenant of the ages, lead us to think of Christ and Christ alone. True, he sware, not by himself, but by "Him that liveth for ever and ever," Jehovah, the eternal Redeemer, God of Israel, the Creator and Ruler of the entire universe; and this has appeared to be the act of only a created being. Still, when one swears by God, he does so with respect to what he is doing or is about to do himself, whether to speak the truth or to fulfil a promise, so that the value of the oath ever depends upon the character and ability of him who uses it. In this way, as Vitringa and others urge, the hope of the Church must be sustained by more than the word or oath of any created being, however great.

This angel is certainly represented as very great. "His right foot is upon the sea, and his left upon the earth." But this would imply, not mere power, but right as well as power, to rule over the whole world, a right and a power claimed by Christ and ascribed to Christ—nay, actually assumed by Him, when He took His place on His Father's throne. All, then, seems to point to Him. One consideration more, which seems to have been overlooked, appears almost to settle the point. This angel comes forward with an oath which, we shall find, pertains to the downfall of the greatest enemy of Christ, even the antichristian power, whose rise the two woe-trumpets have just revealed,—nay, that very power by which the place or throne of Christ, as the Head of the Church, was usurped the power described by Paul as "sitting in the temple of God," or within the Church of God, "setting himself forth as God,"—yes, according to historical fact, declaring himself, as Vicar of Christ, to have rightful power over the whole world. Coming, then, down from heaven, to cheer His suffering and fainting people, long crushed and almost exterminated by this usurper of the place of the Divine King of the world, what could be more appropriate or more opportune than such a vision of the majesty and power and dominion of Jesus Christ?

As to the name or idea of an angel, why, Christ is expressly called "the Messenger or the Angel of the covenant," that very covenant whose full and triumphant fulfilment this "strong angel" here declares to be certainly coming, if not to be near at hand. Once more, this view of the case would correspond with the way

in which Christ is opportunely represented elsewhere, as in the instance of the Lamb with His sealed company appearing on Mount Zion in close connection with the description of the beast and his many followers with his mark on their foreheads. However, we think too much weight may be laid on the mere form of expression here used, "another strong angel," as if he must be of the same class as the "strong angel" of the fifth chapter. We find a third "strong angel" referred to in the eighteenth chapter. Indeed, all counter argument seems fully set aside by one clear and simple proof.

We have already identified the Great High Priest of the first chapter with the "man clothed in linen" of Dan. x. 4—6. As to their identity we can have no doubt. But, there can be as little reasonable doubt as to the identity of this "strong angel" with the very same "man clothed in linen," of Dan. xii. 5—7, which it may be well fully to quote: "Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on the brink of the river on this side, and the other on the brink of the river on that side. And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was above the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? and I heard the man clothed in linen, which was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by Him that liveth for ever, that it shall be for a time, times and a half; and when they have made an end of breaking in pieces the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished." Thus we have here not only a sufficient proof of identity, but also a like sufficient evidence of the identity of the vision of John and this prevision of Daniel, with this one necessary difference, —that in the one the whole period or time is referred to three years and a half, or the entire one thousand two hundred and threescore years, of which we shall have again and again to treat; whilst in the other only the closing portion of that time or period of the suffering or "breaking in pieces of the power of the holy people" is spoken of in the oath of the "strong angel," whom we thus identify with Jesus Christ. In fact, if the identity of the two visions, with the difference alluded to, had been kept in view, the real key to the meaning of both would have been found, and almost the whole difficulty in the interpretation of that before us very simply removed. We may add that we have here a full correspondence between the vision of Jehovah with the close sealed book which the Lamb or Jesus alone could open, and this vision of the Strong Angel or Jesus with the open little book, doubtless open because

Jesus could and did open the whole of the sealed book of which we may safely regard this open little book as simply a special and important part. In keeping with our idea of Jesus being intended by the "strong angel," we are told that, when he cried aloud, "the seven thunders uttered their voices," no doubt implying at least the presence of God.

3. *Vers. 4.* "And when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying, Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not."

These voices gave expression to what John so heard as to be about to write in accordance with the command given him (chap. i. 19). He is told, however, by a voice from heaven, to seal them up, or not to record and so to reveal them. They were not to be made a part of this Apocalypse. Yet some interpreters have tried to discover what God was thus pleased to conceal. One thing is certainly implied: that we need not expect a complete revelation of God and of His ways towards ourselves. There are "secret things which belong to Him," that we, with no mere curiosity gratified, may be satisfied with the knowledge of those which are "revealed and belong to us," and make all practical use of them in obeying His holy and perfect will.

4. *Vers. 5-7.* "And the angel which I saw standing upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his right hand to heaven, and swore by Him that liveth for ever and ever, who created the heaven and the things that are therein, and the earth and the things that are therein, and the sea and the things that are therein, that (the) time (of suffering) shall be no longer, but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which He declared to His servants the prophets."

(1) How grand this whole scene! This mighty Being, in this sublime attitude, claims to have all power over, and all right of possession to, the entire world. His position so far resembles that in the vision of Daniel, of "the man clothed in linen," who is said to be "above the waters of the river," and so evidently over all things and able to stand upon both sea and land, or to claim full authority over both. In both visions, too, we have virtually one and the same sublimely recorded oath. In the one case "the man clothed in linen" "held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven and swore by Him that liveth for ever"; whilst in the other "the strong angel lifted up his right hand to heaven, and swore by" the same Jehovah of hosts, the same great "I AM THAT

I AM," even "by Him that liveth for ever and ever." Thus far John simply borrows the words of Daniel. The oath, too, is quite of the same nature—nay, as already suggested, is the very same oath, only referring in the one case to the whole time of antichristian oppression, the whole time of the "breaking in pieces the power of the holy people," and referring in the other to the close of the same sad period, the three years and a half or forty and two months of the reign of the beast, to whom it was given "to make war with the saints," these holy people, "and to overcome them," or to "break their power."

That the "strong angel" may give the more satisfactory consolation to those who had been so long oppressed, he adds to the name of the Living God that of the Universal Creator, of Him who made heaven and earth and sea, and all things therein, as if sublimely to set forth His absolute power over the entire universe, and perfect ability to come for the deliverance of those whose cry had for ages entered His ears, "How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" A like question, only suitable to the distant past, we find put in the vision of Daniel, "How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?" The answer, as we have found, points to the whole time of the predicted suffering of the saints. The cry of the Christian martyrs or martyr Church is here met with this mighty oath, this most certain assurance, that the period of Daniel, the period of the deadly reign of the Apocalyptic beast, was now at an end, or at least near its end, and would close or approach its close "in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound." Such is, we are assured, the meaning of the words of the oath rendered, rightly or wrongly, in both Authorised and Revised Versions, "that there should or shall be time no longer," words which are certainly most obscure, seemingly capable of bearing no proper meaning, and which have given rise to endless discussion on the one hand, and to the strangest imaginations on the other.

(2) Let us carefully inquire concerning their real meaning, or how far such meaning may be, with any exactness, ascertained. In doing so, we may remark as follows:—

First. It has now become usual to translate, "there shall be delay," not, "there shall be time, no longer." This gives at least a more intelligible meaning: our Revisers have put "delay" in the margin. The American translators have shown their preference by putting it in the text. Alford retains "time," but explains the

expression as if "delay" were really meant. He says,—"*that time should no longer be*" (i.e., should no more intervene: in allusion to the answer given to the cry of the souls of the martyrs, chap. vi. 11, 'καὶ ἐρρήθη αὐτοῖς ἵνα ἀναπαύσωνται ἔτι χρόνον μικρόν.' This whole series of trumpet-judgments has been an answer to the prayers of the saints, and now the vengeance is about to receive its entire fulfilment: *χρόνος οὐκέτι ἔσται*: the appointed delay is at an end. That this is the meaning is shown by the *ἀλλ' ἐν τ. ἡμ.* which follows." We have no doubt this expresses, to all intents at least, the real and only meaning. The word "time," if thus understood to have been appointed or to have been expressly referred, would answer as well as "delay." The Greek *χρόνος*, through anarthrous, may, as pointing to a time or period so well known or so desired and expected, may be viewed as requiring no definition: "The time for the Martyr-church to wait for future vindication is now coming to an end, and will come to an end when the seventh angel is about to sound, and when accordingly the mystery of God, with regard to this very matter, is finished." In the answer to the cry of the martyrs in chap. vi. 1, and in these words of this oath, which is just a repetition of the same answer, only towards the close of the time of rest, we have the same word for time, *ἔτι χρόνον μικρόν* in the one case, and *χρόνος οὐκέτι* in the other. As we cannot translate "delay" in the former, we should not and need not render "delay" in the latter. The time of waiting is called "little" to the sufferers, though it would seem a very long time to them, just as those afflictions which, speaking comparatively, Paul calls "light and but for a moment" could not but be very heavy and long-continued to those who endured them.

Secondly. All this might be confirmed by a very simple omission of the negative portion of the oath, whose import alone is obscure, and which must be really, if not entirely, implied in the positive form which follows. In the Authorised Version, the colon placed between these two forms, together with the division of the verses, has tended to conceal their essential connection, and to involve both in obscurity. Leaving out the negative, we have, "the angel . . . swear . . . that . . . in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God," etc. In this way, though the entire import of the oath might not be suggested, its true scope would have been made sufficiently clear, whilst the exegetical difficulty, which has long perplexed interpreters, would never have appeared. Their minds would have been simply directed to the grand object intended—that of at once saintly

longing and divine promise or prediction. We put the matter thus, because, whatever its meaning, the negative portion must at least be in perfect harmony with the positive, and so could not possibly have suggested such ideas—for instance, the close of all time—as have been actually suggested by almost every version, “that time shall be no longer.”

Thirdly. Restoring the negative part, the whole may be seen to have a most important and consistent meaning. The time alluded to we have found to be referred to directly in Dan. xii. 7, taken in connection with Dan. vii. 25, as that of the persecuting reign of the “little horn,” and in Revelation xiii. 5 as that of the same persecuting reign of the same horn or power, only under the name of the Beast. We have also found it referred to indirectly in Rev. vi. 11, as that of the period of rest or patient waiting during the persecution of the second class of martyrs, or of those who were to suffer under the same persecuting reign of the beast. Now for the fourth time the same period is referred to in this great oath as that which would last no longer, or which at least would soon come to its predicted end, even “in the days of the voice of the seventh angel,” whose trumpet, the second woe-trumpet, was about to sound. All the visions and predictions are thus perfectly harmonious and mutually explanatory. Thus,

Fourthly. We are now prepared to interpret what follows, and what, apart from such considerations, must appear dark, if not inexplicable. We refer to the positive part of the oath,—“but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which He declared to His servants the prophets.” Here we must note, first, that by “the mystery of God” seems to be intended that to which that mystery related, even the revealed or predicted close of the awful time of the persecution of the true Christian people. Paul uses the word in a similar way,—1 Cor. xv. 51, “Behold, I tell you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,”—a secret of God made known to man. Hence this mystery is here said to have been “declared to His servants the prophets,” and, at the same time, to be in reality a gospel or good news imparted to them to be conveyed to us. But why the wide or general expression, “according to the good tidings,” as if the entire prophetic revelation of the coming and kingdom of Christ were referred to? The idea intended seems to be that this special mystery or joyful promise or prediction formed a most important part of the entire revelation of the servants of God, the prophets of Israel.

All these prophets pointed not only to the coming of Christ, but to His glorious and universal kingdom. Still they did not all point to the first rejection of Christ, far less to this special time of awful apostasy on the one hand and of fearful persecution on the other. It was reserved for Daniel to provide a whole mass of prophecy or of prophetic history, containing this very picture of the reign of the "little horn" or beast of the Apocalypse, and at the same time, and in "the vision of the man clothed in linen," or of Jesus Christ, this great angel, also to give the clearest information as to the glorious and most joyful release of the saints of God or people of Christ from this most impious and destructive reign. When that reign should be, or when that release should be obtained, "then," as we are here told, "is finished" this very "mystery of God," or, as in the vision of Daniel, and in answer to the question "How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?" we are expressly told, "when they have made an end of breaking in pieces the power of the holy people,"—when the "little horn" has completed his terrible work,— "All these things shall be finished," and, as in Dan. vii. 26, 27, then "the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion,"—the dominion of the "little horn,"—"to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High: His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him." All this glorious triumph of Christ and true Christians shall follow, as we find sublimely set forth in Rev. xi. 15—18, to which we shall have again and again to refer, and in which we are told of the fulfilment of the words of the great oath now under consideration, or of the important event there anticipated, the sounding of the trumpet of the seventh angel.

5. *Vers. 8-11.* "And the voice which I heard from heaven, (I heard it) again speaking with me, and saying, Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel that standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. And I went unto the angel, saying unto him that he should give me the little book. And he saith unto me, Take it, and eat it up: and it shall make thy belly bitter, but in thy mouth it shall be sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and when I had eaten it, my belly was made bitter. And they say unto me, (or, and he said unto me,) Thou must prophesy again over (or, concerning) many peoples and nations, and tongues and kings."

This last verse gives the key to the nature and design of this little

open book which John was told to take out of the angel's hand, and which the angel told him to eat up. John had, by writing all that precedes this vision in the Apocalypse, already prophesied over many peoples. He had set forth the rise and progress of the kingdom of Christ in the midst of the whole empire of pagan and persecuting Rome. He had prophesied of its triumphs and of its sufferings. As will appear more clearly afterwards, he had prophesied, in the first four trumpet-visions, of the fall of that empire in its pagan form, the form in which it both persecuted the Church of Christ and formed a restraining power over the gradually rising and ever growing power of the new Paganism and new spiritual despotism within that Church. In the last two visions he had prophesied of that new Paganism and spiritual despotism as a terrible agency from the abyss, and as perverting and forming into a new pagan empire the great multitudes of the unsealed, represented by the waters of the great river Euphrates, and having armies of countless soldiers of darkness and destruction.

At the time set forth by this vision of the strong angel, John is now face to face with this new empire, with "its many peoples and nations, tongues and kings," the empire of Papal Rome, as we have so far shown, and as will, we think, fully appear, as it is afterwards more and more clearly set forth and carefully considered. Here, then, John is to be regarded as making a new start. The true apostolic Church, or the true Israel, is again in the midst of many peoples, made up of Christians who have corrupted themselves or been corrupted by the terrible agency from the abyss, the false teachers who have substituted "another gospel, and yet not another," for that pure and life-giving gospel of Jesus Christ,—in fact, in the midst of the many peoples making up the new pagan empire of Papal Rome. Hence the new part which John is here called upon to perform—that of prophesying again over many peoples. He is, accordingly, told by the angel to take this open book out of the hand of the angel whose great oath we have been contemplating, and by that angel to take it and to eat it up. All this is very simple. The open book contained what John was thus appointed to predict. As we have said, it was open in the hand of Him who had opened all the seals of the sealed book containing this whole revelation.

John thus receives the revelation symbolised by this little book, and relating to what he is here said to be called upon to predict. In this way we need not spend much thought on the various theories with respect to this little book or special portion of the Apocalypse intended by it. We may be sure, at least, that it contains all that

John was called upon thus "again to prophesy"; and that, we shall find as we advance, relates to the terrible kingdom whose rise from from the abyss had just been predicted. It may therefore be called, "The Book of the Prophecy of the great Apostasy described by the Apostle Paul, or of the Kingdom of the Beast from the Abyss described in this Book by the Apostle John." It may be asked, Does it contain no more? Does it not contain the whole of the remaining part of the Apocalypse? This question is more curious than important. For, if we exclude all that relates to the Millennial period and the New Jerusalem, we merely suppose this to belong to the more general revelation of this Apocalypse; and if we include all that, then we regard it as setting forth the recovery of the true Church from the crushing power of the false, and the grand result of that recovery in the final and glorious triumph of the gospel and kingdom of Christ.

This question, like other questions of similar nature, can be sufficiently well answered on the ground of sufficient evidence, but cannot, on such evidence, be so precisely and definitely answered as to satisfy that needless curiosity in which we are too apt to indulge. That the taking and eating of this book symbolises a preparation for the work of prophesying is finely illustrated in the case of Ezekiel, as we find in chaps. ii. and iii.: "Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to nations that are rebellious, which have rebelled against Me: they and their fathers have transgressed against Me, even unto this day. . . . And they, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear . . . yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them. . . . thou son of man, hear what I say unto thee. . . . open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee. And when I looked, behold, an hand was put forth unto me: and, lo, a roll of a book was therein; and He spread it before me: and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe. And he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest, eat this roll, and go, speak unto the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat the roll. And He said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then I did eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness. And He said, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with My words unto them." All this clearly suggests that this roll of a book symbolised what Ezekiel was to convey as a prophecy or direct message from Jehovah to Israel, Israel fallen, Israel perverted and corrupted, Israel in a state

not unlike that of the perverted and corrupted Church of Christ or professing Israel of God, of which John was, in like manner, here sent to prophesy. In going on, in the following chapters, with the revelation of the great antichristian defection, John, we may be assured, will have to set forth very much concerning the state of the true Church of Christ or true Israel of God. In doing both, he may be led, as we shall find that he is led, to go back, it may be again and again, to the past—nay, to represent in symbolic form, and so far in express words, the whole Scriptural development of the redemptive kingdom of God.

II.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MEASURING OF THE TEMPLE, OR THE RETURN TO HEATHENISM. THE TWO WITNESSES, OR THE FALL AND RISE OF THE TRUE MINISTRY, AND THE SOUNDING OF THE THIRD WOE-TRUMPET, OR THE PRE-ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE FALL OF ANTI-CHRIST.

1. *Vers. 1, 2*, "And there was given me a reed like a rod; and one said, Rise and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. And the court which is without the temple leave without, and measure it not; for it hath been given unto the nations; and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months."

Here, as implied in the immediately preceding words, John begins what may be called his second prophecy or the second part of his entire prophecy. As already pointed out, the greater part of this chapter belongs to the same period as that of the ninth, or of the first two woe-trumpets, as is implied by the announcement of the coming of the third woe, not at the end of the ninth chapter, but after this vision of the two witnesses has been recorded. In fact, John had been led to set forth symbolically the great apostasy, including the rise from the abyss of a fearful religiously perverting power on the one hand, and of a countless number of people perverted by it on the other. Having thus set forth the great apostasy or apostate Church, he is now led to set forth what remains of the true and faithful Church during the time of the apostasy. He is told to "go and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein." A more

complete description of the true Christian Church, viewed as the real Israel of God, and in keeping with constant New Testament usage, could not be given. Only one part needed for full delineation is left out—even the court of the temple, the part accessible to the people and used by them. The altar of burnt offering is kept in connection with the temple and the worshippers, and measured along with them. This does not break up the symmetrical form or completeness of the symbolism, though the altar was in the open court, as it really belonged to the priesthood, and not to the people, whilst a figurative description of the true Israel, exclusive of an altar of such significance, would assuredly be imperfect. The idea, then, is, Measure the temple and the altar, measure all belonging to the priesthood and representative of those who form the true Israel, or who have been “loosed from their sins by the blood of Christ, and made a kingdom, even priests unto His God and Father.” John is to measure or count these, to set forth the real state of the true Church during the great apostasy.

If the Church had remained pure, apostolic, Christian, the measurement of the court must have been included also. But the vastly greater number of Christians have been perverted, have corrupted themselves, have turned away from the true temple and altar, and have, as in the days of Elijah, ceased to be the true people and worshippers of Jehovah, and become, as in these ancient days, the people and the worshippers of another god, of a new Baal, a new lord of the world; making themselves a new or restored pagan empire, consisting of mere men of the earth, mere nations of the world, Jews become Gentiles, instead of Gentiles become Jews. To these gentilised Jews, these paganised Christians, is the open “court given, and the holy city shall they tread,” under their unholy feet, and as if they belonged to the city and kingdom of the true David, “forty and two months.” Now, though we have thus interpreted, as if it were fairly implied in what we have endeavoured to show is the true meaning of the two visions of chap. ix., we by no means make our interpretation of the words before us depend on the correctness of our view of these visions. The statement as to the court being given to the nations, whilst the part specially belonging to the priesthood is made to represent the true Israel, we hold clearly and certainly to demonstrate that John is here led to set forth a great falling away or perversion of the Christian Church. No other idea can with any propriety be attached to the words. These words, indeed, are used by Christ Himself, and have been supposed to refer to the same thing. This, however, is by no

means the case. Christ is speaking expressly of the approaching desolation of Judæa and dispersion of the Jewish nation, evidently in connection with the rejection of Himself, the true King of Israel—a rejection which implied that the people with their rulers had ceased to be the people of Jehovah. Hence His words, Luke xxi. 24, "And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden of the Gentiles (or nations), until the times of the Gentiles (or nations) be fulfilled": infallibly true, and, for more than eighteen centuries, historically and visibly fulfilled, words of prophecy, not, however, relating to what we are now considering, yet here assuredly made use of as figuratively and finely setting forth what is here intended.

As the Gentiles by nature shall tread down the literal Jerusalem, the city of those who had ceased to be the true people of Jehovah, so shall the Gentiles by apostasy or spiritual perversion "tread under foot" the mystic Jerusalem, the Jerusalem representative of the Church of Jesus Christ. In this way the words before us so certainly refer to some great falling away or apostasy as to prove the certainty of the greatly more obscure, or rather the greatly less clear, reference of the two visions of chap. ix. The harmony of the views given of all adds to the certainty of the correctness of each. That we have expressed the true idea intended by the giving to John "a reed like unto a rod to measure the temple," may be clearly seen, if we turn to the parallel passages in the Old Testament evidently here referred to. In Ezek. xl. we are told of the prophet, just at such a time in the history of ancient Israel as that here referred to in the history of spiritual Israel—namely, after Jerusalem had fallen because of apostasy—being "in the vision of God . . . set down upon a very high mountain, whereon was as it were the frame of a city. . . . And, behold, there was a man . . . with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed." Then follow all the details of the measurement of the temple, the city, and the divisions of the land of Israel. The design was symbolically to represent the restoration of apostatised and fallen Israel; and the city thus presented to Ezekiel forms the groundwork of the city described in the end of this Book, and also symbolically representative of the restoration and triumphant glory of the revived and completed Church of Jesus Christ.

In the case of the temple of Ezekiel, we find a clear distinction drawn between "the inner court" and "the outer court": the inner enclosing the altar of burnt-offerings and all that really belonged

to the priesthood, and the outer expressly distinguished from the inner, and said to belong to the people (chaps. xlii. 14, xlii. 19). This is the court here said to be "given unto the nations." Again, in Zech. ii. 1—5 we find the same idea of the measurement of Jerusalem, and also in the prospect of coming restoration and exaltation. In this case the man "with the measuring line in his hand" is virtually told not to proceed; the coming Jerusalem is to be surrounded with no material walls, because of the greatness of the numbers of its inhabitants, and because "Jehovah will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and the glory in the midst of her." The measuring implies limitation; the not measuring unlimited enlargement. Here it sets forth the limitation of the true Church to the narrowest bounds because of the perversion of those represented by the open court—in fact, by almost the whole nation. There still remains to be noticed the symbolically expressed period of this vast and fearful apostasy, that of "*forty and two months*." Whatever the length of time thus symbolically defined, the words clearly express the fact that this apostasy shall not last for ever, but must come to an end, fully known to God, and thus certainly to be anticipated by the temple worshippers or greatly reduced true Christian people.

As to the interpretation of this numerical symbol, we need not say much diversity of opinion has long obtained, though the greater number of the most learned and judicious expositors has favoured what is usually called the year-day theory, by which every symbolic day represents a literal year. Here we cannot treat of this with all the fulness which a point of such prophetic interest and importance merits. It has been largely discussed by others. We would simply say that it has strongly commended itself to our mind after not a little study. Still, we have at least no express statement in its support. It must stand or fall on the ground of a faithful and correct induction of facts. Here we may safely say that the idea of literally "forty-two months" being intended is simply ridiculous. What is spoken of could not possibly have been said, by any writer, inspired or uninspired, to have lasted for only forty-two months, or 1260 days, as in next verse, or three years and a half, as elsewhere.

It is to be carefully observed that this important period, whether expressed in days or months or years, specially belongs to the prophecy of Daniel, closely connects this Book with that prophecy, and suggests the idea that, in all or almost all cases in which it is introduced, we have rather an interpretation and enlargement of the prophecy of Daniel than an independent or altogether new prophecy

of John. This being the case, the natural method of investigation would be that of inquiring, in the first instance at least, whether we have any sufficient reason for concluding that Daniel actually used this symbolic number, in keeping with the year-day system. Viewed as a prophet of Israel, Daniel was familiar with the idea of Jehovah acting on the year-day principle, at one of the most important periods of the history of Israel: we refer to the appointment of the forty years' detention in the wilderness as a punishment of the abuse of the forty days' searching of the land of promise. This fact, which must have been peculiarly often in the memory of all intelligent Israelites, and especially of such an one as Daniel, we find thus recorded,—Numb. xiv. 33, 34, "And your children shall be wanderers in the wilderness forty years. . . . After the number of the days in which ye spied out the land, even forty days, for every day a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years." Let it be marked that this mode of reckoning is here fully ascribed to God. The very same is ascribed to Him in Ezek. iv. 1—6: "Thou also, son of man, take thee a tile . . . and pourtray upon it a city, even Jerusalem: and lay siege against it. . . . This shall be a sign to the house of Israel. Moreover, lie thou upon thy left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it: (according to) the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon it, thou shalt bear thine iniquity. For I have appointed the years of their iniquity to be unto thee a number of days, even three hundred and ninety days: so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. And again, when thou hast accomplished these, thou shall lie on thy right side, and shall bear the iniquity of the house of Judah: forty days, each day for a year, have I appointed it unto thee."

So far, then, as the Divine method of symbolism is concerned, and that not far from the date of the prophecies of Daniel, we have, in these words, an actual case of a prophet being instructed to set forth two distinct signs, the one to the house of Israel and the other to the house of Judah, according to the year-day system. It would be, therefore, very far from unlikely or strange that Daniel, a contemporary of Ezekiel, should be led by the same spirit of inspiration to set forth certain most important periods in the future history of the true Israel after the same symbolic manner. Still, this is no proof that he actually did so. It, however, ought to prepare us to accept proof, if any such can be found. Certainly, it would justly lead us to accept the year-day system, in the case before us, with still greater ease and still less reluctance, if we not only found pretty strong evidence based upon apparently the actual historical

fulfilment of the various statements of John, but also found that Daniel had actually been led to set forth the most important and well-known of all dates, even that of the coming of the great and promised Messiah after this very manner. Now, this he appears most decidedly to have done in that most remarkable prophecy of the seventy weeks. We are fully aware of the difficulties connected with the details. The starting point, or terminus à quo, may not be exactly traceable, and may not have been intended to have been precisely known; but the fact that the Messiah came and suffered at a time which no one can show to have been at all inconsistent with the terms of the prophecy, interpreted according to the year-day principle, seems quite sufficient to prove two things:—*First*, that the prophecy thus regarded was so truly fulfilled as to yield a striking prophetic testimony to the Divine Mission of Jesus; and, *secondly*, that Daniel, to whose prophecies of the very things now under consideration, John, in this and one or two subsequent chapters, directly and conspicuously refers, and calls our most careful attention, appears most assuredly to proceed upon this very principle of a year for a day.

As these times of the apostasy, as they may be called, are really transferred from Daniel to the Apocalypse, it is therefore only right that we should treat them as the symbolic numbers of one who, at least in one notable instance, proceeded on the principle in question; and yet we are not bound to apply that principle here unless on the safe basis of evidence due to actual fulfilment. As already said, we must bring the year-day theory to the test of all the instances in which the remarkable period is, in one form or another, expressly stated. And here one thing ought to be noted and kept in view, in the consideration of all the symbolic numbers of this Book, that, as that remarkable period has simply been transferred from Daniel, and must be viewed as thus no original symbol of John, we are not at liberty to apply the principle of a year for a day to any other part of the Apocalypse. If we do, unless we have sufficient independent evidence, we may most egregiously err, and misuse Daniel to the misunderstanding of John. We may also greatly err if we do not guard against what has been too often attempted—viz., the fixing of the precise date, perhaps the very year, if not the very day, in which these times began, and thus the like exact time in which they are expected to terminate. We should remember that the beginning and ending of any prophetic period may, like the beginning and ending of the light of day, be absolutely indeterminable. How unreasonable, to come to our

subject, to expect to fix the precise date of the beginning or ending of such a thing as a great falling away or apostasy from Christian faith and practice! If we can find considerable periods in history corresponding to like considerable periods referred to in the prophecy, and if these periods are those of such remarkable events or objects as cannot be fairly supposed to have been foreseen by any one but the great Inspirer of all true prophecy, we ought to be content, even though we may have to allow not only years, but even centuries, for possible miscalculations as to origin or end.

It has been usual with those holding the year-day theory to consider the equality of all the periods referred to as demonstrating the sameness of the historical times intended. This equality has its own meaning, as we shall afterwards find. However, it can easily be proved that two periods of the same length, in some cases at least, do not coincide. Thus, in the words now under consideration we have a period of forty-two months, of thirty days each, exactly equal to the period of 1260 days mentioned in the verse which immediately follows; and yet it can be proved, by this very chapter, that the two equal periods have not the same end, and therefore ought not to have the same beginning. They have not the same end; for the city remains, with the exception of a tenth part, for some undefined time after the witnesses have finished their testimony and been slain by the beast that cometh out of the abyss. This appears to have been overlooked. Much confusion of ideas and of reasoning seems here to have arisen through want of careful discrimination in the treatment of the cities referred to in the prediction. As has frequently happened, the greatest amount of error has been entertained by the seemingly unconscious intermingling of the things symbolising with the things symbolised. What we mean will appear more clearly as we go on.

2. *Ver.* 3. "And I will give unto My two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days clothed in sack-cloth."

These seem to be the words of the angel whom we have regarded as representing Jesus Christ. At any rate, the one who here speaks must be either Christ or God. The witnesses might be of either. Yet, as their Lord is said to be crucified, the former appears certainly intended. The words are well rendered, but might also have been translated "the witnesses of Me." The whole scope of the passage suggests that, however truly they were to testify against

the errors and corruption of the paganised Church, the great burden of their testimony was that of Jesus Christ. They would witness for Him and for His true Church; and so against all usurpation of His place and all perversion of His people. He would "give unto them," not only all power, but all protection, and all needed in order to the right fulfilment of their most important, most difficult and most dangerous work. . . "And they shall prophesy." They are prophets, then; but whether viewed personally or not cannot yet be gathered. We do not think we can possibly limit their work to that of foretelling the future, or even regard such as a chief part of their work at all. They are witnesses, and, as such, need say nothing of the future, unless what was included in the apostolic testimony of Christ. In fact, that testimony was what they and all proper witnesses of Christ are appointed to hold. They seem to be emphatically called "*My two witnesses.*" Alford has accordingly pressed the idea of a dualism which must be recognised in any correct interpretation. In this he seems quite mistaken. The emphatic "two" may, as we are assured it does, simply point to the fact that they are all that remain of His whole body of witnesses, or that they are no more in number than must be had in order to give legal or sufficient evidence.

However, before proceeding further, we may say that the identification of these two prophetic witnesses has led to an immense account of research, speculation and discussion, and, we may add, to the expression of the most extravagant imaginations. The solution of the difficulty has thus appeared to some to have become utterly hopeless. And yet the means of identification presented in this very passage seem wonderfully ample, and not at all insufficient. Before this can be seen, the entire prophecy must be studied. In the outset, we must keep fully in view what has been said, that the time here spoken of is that of the great apostasy. We are expressly told that the holy city is to be given over to the Gentiles. Let us once more refer to what is meant here by "*the Holy city.*" Neglect of this has caused much confusion of thought. It is certainly not the literal city of Jerusalem,—not only because it was no longer in any sense "*the holy city,*" but also, and mainly, because it is "*the Holy City*" of the Christian Church. If the temple and altar represent that Church, then the city must just be the city representing the same Church,—"*the Holy City of the saints or true Israel of God.*" As all the members of the apostolic Churches are called holy, or saints, because spoken of according to profession, collectively, professing Christians are professedly citizens of this

heavenly Jerusalem. That being the case, all unreal or fallen or perverted, or, as here, paganised Christians, spoken of according to profession, tread this holy and heavenly city. Let the great mass of them become pagan, and then the nations tread the holy city; but by so doing, what do they really make it? No longer the city of God, but the city afterwards called "the great city" in this chapter, and in subsequent chapters "Babylon the great," "the great city, Babylon." Let this then, be noted: that in leaving out the holy city and declaring that it is to be occupied by Gentiles calling themselves Israelites or Christians, that city ceases to be the spiritual Jerusalem, and becomes the mystic Babylon, only called the true Jerusalem or the true Christian Church by all its paganised citizens.

In this way there ought to be no difficulty in seeing the identity of "the holy city," thus become unholy, and "the great city" in whose street "the bodies" of the witnesses are said to have been exposed. We make this remark so far to meet an objection, which has been made and which might appear of force, that Jerusalem is not called great. This is true, but it is certainly no reason why, whilst retaining the name, it should not be called great, when it has really become the Antichristian Church or the Babylon of the nations. "*A thousand two hundred and threescore days.*" A period, as already said, of the same length as the forty and two months just spoken of, but not, as we have shown, entirely coincident with it. This, when treated more fully in due course, will not only be seen to be the fact, but also to be so for a very clear and satisfactory reason.

"*Clothed in sackcloth.*" Entertaining the idea that this was in token of repentance, Alford says, "Certainly this portion of the prophetic description strongly favours the individual interpretation. . . . One does not see how bodies of men who lived like other men . . . can be said to have prophesied 'clothed in sackcloth.' " According to this, these prophets should be viewed as two individual men. We certainly hold that they, by the very terms, and apart from their clothing, are here set forth as two individual men, two real persons. But Alford, like many others, simply does what we have been warning against—namely, confounds the symbol with the thing symbolised. For, be it that they are described as real persons, the question remains, Are we, in the midst of a whole cluster of symbols, to hold them to be literally or actually what they thus appear, or to regard them as symbolically representative of some special class or even succession of men? Their using sackcloth would, in this latter case, simply typify that the class or succession of men repre-

sented did their appointed work in the spirit of humiliation and lamentation, because of the depression of the true Church and the vastness of the degradation and mournful condition of the false. So Daniel put on sackcloth when acknowledging a like condition of his own people and praying with all earnestness for their restoration. If all the captives in Babylon had breathed the same spirit, though they "lived like other men," they might have well been typified by Daniel as a "prophet clothed in sackcloth." So the two prophets here may well be viewed as most fitly representing an order or body of men deeply and painfully mourning the state of the sadly perverted Church, though they followed their Master's counsel, put on no badge of humiliation, and did "not appear to fast." If the prophets witnessed for ages, as they must have done if the 1260 days of their prophecy meant 1260 years, or as, apart from this, the very greatness of the predicted apostasy would seem decidedly to prove, then a successive class and no two individuals must certainly be intended; and this alone can be made to consist with the entire details of this passage.

3. *Ver.* 4. "These are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks standing before the Lord of the earth."

No one can possibly take these words literally. Whatever the full meaning, the words clearly imply that these prophets are or may be represented or symbolised by what we find set forth in the Old Testament Scriptures,—Zech. iv. 1-14, where the prophet is made to see a golden candlestick, with its bowl on the top of it, and its seven lamps and two olive trees, one on either side, with two branches which empty the golden oil into the golden bowl. Now, as this seven-branched candlestick is really that of the tabernacle, a temple whose lamps had to be continually supplied with the needful oil, the two olive trees can point to nothing else than the source or sources whence that oil flowed into the bowl to be thence conveyed to all the lamps of the candlestick. But, why living olive trees thus connected with the golden candlestick? We can suppose no better reason than this, that the real and ultimate source of illumination was He who gives life to the olive trees and makes them pour forth the golden oil or to be the medium of that illumination.

There is thus a complex, at least a double symbol of the object symbolised presented to the view of the prophet Zechariah;—*First*, There is the tabernacle or temple symbol of the ancient Church or people of Israel, the symbol of the seven-branched candlestick,

of that Church or people viewed as enlightened by Jehovah and as giving light to the world. So, at least, it is virtually set forth by the very substitution of the seven candlesticks of Rev. i. representative of spiritual Israel or the Christian Church. *Secondly*, We have the two olive trees, two branches of which empty their oil into the bowl of the candlestick, and so convey the needed means of illumination. This addition was admirably adapted to meet the requirements of the whole thing symbolised. Israel was very feeble, had but partially returned from captivity in Babylon, and the prospect of full restoration was not so bright or so sure as the pious Israelites, engaged in the rebuilding of the temple and city of Jerusalem, earnestly desired. The vision is granted to inspire confidence and to encourage work. At the head of the returned captives were Joshua the high priest, and Zerubbabel, a prince of the house of David, and therefore virtually their king. These two were animated and enlightened by the Spirit of Jehovah, really anointed as high priest and as king of Israel, "the two anointed ones or sons of oil, that stand by (or before) the Lord of the whole earth"; that is to say, the Spirit of Jehovah is to be viewed as giving all needed light and power to these chosen heads of Israel, that that Israel may be enlightened by them, and that thus Israel, renewed and reconstituted under former regal and priestly government, might have all the needed and Divinely provided power to rise to the place and the separate nationality which had been justly lost because of departure from Jehovah, the God of Israel, and because of consequent failure to fulfil, as the people of Jehovah, the purpose of their most significant separation.

That this is, on the whole at least, a correct view of this remarkable portion of ancient Scripture, seems evident from the explanatory words of the angel. When the prophet asked, "What are these, my lord?"—namely, the candlestick and olive trees, the real design of the vision, and not any detailed interpretation, is expressed,—*"This is the word of Jehovah unto Zerubbabel,"* doubtless as visibly symbolised, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts." How fine the answer!—as if He had said, "Ye are a few and feeble people, with many difficulties and enemies, and with a very great work committed to you to do by the God of Israel, in whose name and at whose command you have returned from Babylon to renew your former covenant national position. Fear not. Trust to no army or human aid. Look to Jehovah alone. By His Spirit pervading all, flowing through your

prince and high priest, whose part it is to stand and minister before the Lord of the whole earth, as servants divinely appointed for the purpose, and all shall prosper, the city and temple shall be built. The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me," the angel, "unto you." Hence the defiant words, to meet all despondency and fear of difficulty or opposition, "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel (thou shalt become) a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone with shoutings of Grace, grace, unto it."

To this exposition we have given all this space, because of its special bearing on the words under consideration, whose real or certain meaning can be seen only through the medium of a correct conception of the symbolic vision of Zechariah. Zerubbabel, then, and Joshua are to be viewed as over the house of Israel on the one hand, and as standing as ministering servants before Jehovah on the other. We may say that the expression, "to stand before Jehovah," is used again and again to signify what we have just said; as we find in the case of Elijah, 1 Kings xvii. 1, who said to Ahab, "As Jehovah, the God of Israel, liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." Elisha uses the same expression. So also, and with special reference to their ministry at the tabernacle, the whole tribe of Levi is said, Deut. x. 8, to have been "separated to stand before the Lord, to minister unto Him and to bless in His name." Thus was Aaron especially appointed "to stand before the Lord." If priests, then, engaged in the services of the tabernacle or temple, and prophets, such as Elijah and Elisha, were said so to do, when simply sent to speak in the name of the Lord, then we can easily see how the prophetic witnesses in question should be said to do the same. To understand, we do not need any extravagant supposition of the descent from heaven of any two special messengers of God. Viewed simply as prophets, they are appropriately said so to stand. Both in Zechariah and here, we have the words, "Lord of the earth," and that for a simple reason—namely, that, in both cases, the whole earth was more or less hostile to them; so that in such a title both had a sufficient guarantee for perfect safety and abundant help. On the one side we have old-covenant prophetic witnesses, and they stand and minister before Jehovah; and on the other we have new-covenant prophetic witnesses, and they stand and minister before Jesus Christ their Lord, to whom "all power has been given in heaven and earth."

The witnesses of John correspond to "the anointed ones" of Zechariah. Still there is this marked difference: In the one case the anointed ones are distinguished from the one candlestick; Joshua and Zerubbabel being viewed as over and not simply as of Israel; whereas, in the other case, the witnesses of John are said to be both "the two olive trees and the two candlesticks," seemingly at once both ministry and membership of Churches vastly reduced in number and strength.

This is in keeping with what was suggested as to the seven candlesticks and the seven stars of the first chapter: that they are not to be contemplated as two entirely separate objects, but as one organic whole, membership and ministry combined—the candlesticks Churches self-ruled and self-taught, the stars Churches self-ruling and self-teaching, and candlesticks and stars united holding forth the light of Christ or witnessing for Him. In this way the two witnesses of this chapter would simply be the Christian community, with its appointed ministry, reduced to the lowest state consistent with real fitness to render adequate testimony to Christ and against the corruption of the Church. Of course the ministry of the Church is here specially intended, as the membership of the Church is specially referred to in ver. 2, as perverted and paganised. As we cannot exclude the ministry from the membership thus perverted, so we cannot separate the membership from the ministry making up the two or really few witnesses here spoken of. When paganised Israel rose to the highest number and strength, the true Israel would be reduced, preachers and people together, to the lowest state of feebleness and obscurity consistent, as we have said, with the ability to act as witnesses for Jesus Christ, not only by prophesying or preaching the gospel, but also through the silent, yet powerful, testimony of Christian life and character.

The truth of all this will be felt if it is remembered that the seven golden candlesticks, with the seven stars, not only represent the seven special Churches named, but the sum of all Churches throughout the world. Here the seven are reduced to two—the number of completeness to the smallest number, we may repeat, needful for legal testimony, and therefore the proper number to be here used for the purpose in view. Of course the candlesticks are supposed to exist from age to age, and so those here alluded to are to be regarded as thus continuing to testify. As the false witnesses increased the true decreased, and so had ever-growing reason for lamentation, or for "prophesying in sackcloth." Still, "faithful among the faithless," they are enabled to carry on their

noble and self-sacrificing work amidst endless difficulties and dangers. It will be seen that their ministry must begin at an early date, or long before the apostasy had come to a height or the antichristian system had been fully embodied in "the beast from the abyss," whose war with these witnesses and triumph over them we find here set forth.

4. *Vers.* 5; 6. "And if any man desireth to hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man shall desire to hurt them, in this manner must he be killed. These have power to shut the heaven, that it rain not during the days of their prophecy: and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they shall desire."

We seem to have found that these prophets are to be regarded as Christian communities, symbolically represented as individual persons. Here this idea of persons appears fully to present itself. The witnesses are certainly compared to Elijah first, and then to Moses. At the close of his ministry, it will be remembered, the former commanded fire to come down from heaven and to destroy company after company sent by the king of Israel with a command to come down from the top of a hill to which he had withdrawn. As Elijah, too, these witnesses are said to "have power to shut the heaven that it rain not during the days of their prophecy." Some would therefore suppose that Elijah was really one of these prophets. The words suggest a very important idea—viz., that they had a commission almost exactly parallel to that of Elijah. As he, to use his own words, "stood before Jehovah, the God of Israel," as His chosen witness, to condemn the perversion of nearly the whole nation to heathenism or the worship of Baal, so these witnesses stood before Jesus Christ, as His witnesses, to condemn the like fearful and almost universal perversion of the Christian Church. As Elijah called the people back to the worship of their own covenant God, so these called the paganised Christians to return to the service of their true Redeemer. They are therefore described as endowed with similar miraculous powers, whether in self-defence or in confirmation of their mission. The words, however, need not be taken literally. The meaning seems to be that they, or the Christians represented by them, would be kept in perfect safety, "immortal till their work was done"; and that, thus kept under the overshadowing wings of their King, they are virtually armed as with weapons of surest self-defence. All is said to come from them; but all in reality comes from God. So Jer. v. 14,

"Thus saith Jehovah, the God of hosts, Because ye speak this word" (in contempt of Him and His prophets), "behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them." Again, "they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they shall desire." Here they are compared to Moses. He was a great witness for Jehovah against the tyrannical and enslaving king of Egypt. To fulfil his mission, all needful powers were granted, or rather God commissioned him to declare what was to be done, and Jehovah did according to the word of His servant. In like manner these two prophets, or the Christians represented by them, are to set forth the truth of Christ and to assert His claims; and they are to be so aided in their manifestation of the pure apostolic truths and in their affirmation of the sovereignty of their Divine Lord, just as truly and as appropriately as was Moses in the faithful discharge of his office in the midst of perils of the greatest magnitude. If plagues of any or every sort were needed, these had just to will, and the deadly work was done.

However, as these servants breathed the spirit of their Master, their desires would be in harmony with the perfect will of God, and they knew that He, in doing all His pleasure, would in reality do all their own. He, whose will is cheerfully kept in unison with the will of God and in full submission to it, will, in all such cases as those before us, have that will done, whether in relation to friends or foes. In next chapter the same thing seems to be said in a milder form, and with respect to the same persons, only under quite a different figure, the figure of a woman representative of the Christian Church, and at the same sad period of feebleness and persecution: chap. xii. 14, "And there were given to the woman the two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness unto her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent," even for three years and a half, or as here for 1260 days.

5. *Ver. 7.* "And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that cometh out of the abyss shall make war with them, and shall overcome them and kill them."

This seems clearly to mean, when they have finished the work appointed to them as witnesses during the dark period of their feebleness and mourning. Some, as Elliott, would render, "completed" or given forth the whole truth which they were commissioned to proclaim. It is admitted that the other is the more

natural translation; but this is preferred on the ground that elsewhere the beast is clearly declared to have commenced the war here alluded to long before the work of these witnesses was finished. Certainly it was, as is clearly proved by chapters xiii. and xvii. However, we hold that there is no real inconsistency. That was doubtless carried on from the first rise of the beast from the abyss to the very close of the testimony of the witnesses here referred to. In such a brief and anticipatory notice of the final catastrophe of so prolonged a contest, doubtless with its many intermissions, we can easily suppose the final and most deadly conflict to be alone intended. It would at least be most illegitimate to demand that the words must be taken with such severe exactness, that we could not but infer that what we hold to have been simply passed over could not possibly have taken place. "*The beast that cometh out of the abyss.*" We have already identified this beast with the agency of the fifth trumpet-vision, where his rise is described, as in chapters xiii. and xvii. we find his whole character and reign and war with the saints, including the war here spoken of, fully set forth.

There is no real anticipation of events here introduced. The beast was long in existence before the final conflict with these witnesses, only for good reasons that existence was not yet fully made known. Though we have said the beast of the thirteenth and seventeenth chapters, only that of the seventeenth is said to come from the abyss, and should be regarded as here intended. The beast of the thirteenth is said to have come from the sea, and, at first sight, would appear to be by no means the same. However, this can be thought only by those who overlook one of the most remarkable features of the wonderful picture,—we mean that of one of the heads being said to be "as though it had been smitten (or slain) unto death; and his death-stroke was healed." In due time we shall find that this beast is really representative of two successive empires, the second a restoration of the first; the first, coming out of the sea, receiving a deadly wound or being actually slain, and then, in the form of the second or that from the abyss, rising from the dead, and proving a new and terrible enemy to the kingdom of Jesus Christ, here declared to make this final and most mysteriously successful war with His true and faithful witnesses, and, according to the symbolic language employed, actually putting them to death. All this clearly consists with the idea of the witnesses representing the greatly reduced numbers of the faithful, as we have inferred from the symbols of the olive-trees and the candlesticks, and not with the idea of two literal persons, as many, we feel constrained

to say, most absurdly hold. The idea of a vast empire fighting with two individual men is simply destitute of all propriety. If we suppose so many small communities scattered over such an empire, or often secretly mingled with the peoples composing it, or withdrawn, as on "the wings of the great eagle, to a place prepared for them," and yet again and again coming forth to proclaim the most unwelcome truth of which they are witnesses, all is simple and clear. The war might be long, and with but poor success; till, at last, the appointed work done, that success might be, as we are here told it was, complete.

The question still arises, in what sense complete? or, in what sense were these witnessing communities actually slain? We have no doubt, by the actual death of many a noble and devoted witness for Jesus Christ,—it may have been by many a cruel massacre of the most excellent of the earth. Still, this would only tend to the aim of the destroyer, even that of silencing the divine and faithful testimony by which, as afterwards hinted, the paganised Church, the professedly Christian empire of the beast, and especially the beast or antichristian head, was often and grievously "tormented." When the witnesses were literally fully, and seemingly finally silenced, they were symbolically slain. So terminated the period of their ministry—that of 1260 days, or, according to the year-day principle, of 1260 years. We may be assured it was a period of very long continuance, whether we adopt that principle of calculation or not. As only the test of known fulfilment can fairly and unobjectionably determine, we may, as we go along, make use of it simply as a working hypothesis which is sure to prove its own correctness or incorrectness, when it has been rightly applied to all the various instances of its use. In the case before us, we may say, as already said, that the beginning of these testimonies would coincide with the rise of the false witnesses of the fifth trumpet-vision, and thus long before the beginning of the full development of the beast from the abyss in which the perverting power of these false witnesses issued. The end of their testimony, therefore, in like manner took place as long before the power of the beast was overthrown. It would be ridiculous to point to one year or even short period as the determinable date of the rise or decay of what must have taken ages to come to a marked beginning or to reach a visible end.

Most interpreters put the silencing of the witnesses, or of the enfeebled witnessing community or communities, at some point at no great distance from the opening era of the Reformation, which

they regard as symbolically represented by the resurrection of the witnesses or the breaking of the terrible silence to which the witnessing Church had been reduced. Apart from particulars, we may accept this view as on the whole correct, or as the only one which has yet been upheld with any real cogency of argument. In this case we must go as far back as to the middle of the third century for our starting-point. That there was not a little reason for mourning over departure from the pure spirit and simple truth of Christ at as early a date as this, the history of the Church gives too much reason for the belief. Even Paul speaks of the mystery of the great apostasy being at work in apostolic times. In applying the year-day principle as a working hypothesis, whether so early a date may be fully satisfactory, we cannot at least find in it any really fatal objection. Certainly for a considerable time before Luther startled the whole Roman world by raising that mighty voice which shook that world, at once for the simple truth as it is in Jesus, and against the awful corruptions of the Papal Church, most of the witnessing people had been reduced to the most perfect and painful silence. Apart altogether from our working hypothesis, or from any system of chronological calculation, no one can, with any fairness, and whilst holding by the pure and simple gospel of Christ and His apostles, doubt, on the one hand, that the corruption of the Church began as early as the middle of the third century, and went on till it became all that could be meant by the Apostasy of the apostle Paul, and on the other, that Rome had succeeded in the terrible work of silencing all the voices which dared to protest against her errors or especially to resist her most antichristian claims, at the time here supposed, or that immediately preceding the era of the Reformation. The year-day method seems thus rather illustrated than disproved by this first experimental test.

6. *Ver.* 8. "And their dead bodies (lie) in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified."

Here there is a return to the idea of personal agents; and yet the use of the singular, as we find in the Greek, or of a word which means merely "that which fell," would seem rather applicable to a community. Taking the translation as we find it, the dead bodies of the witnesses are represented as refused the rites of respectful sepulture, and exposed to the view and the contempt of the multitudes which now tread "the holy city," and thus make it no longer the real city of God representative of the true Church of

Jesus Christ. "The holy city" of Christ, whilst proudly retaining the name, has become "the great city" of Antichrist, just as Jesus said of the Temple, designed to be "a house of prayer," "ye have made it a den of thieves." But this great city is no material city, certainly not the material city of Rome, however that may be associated with it; and the bodies are no corpses of slain or murdered men. They are so, indeed, viewed symbolically. They clearly represent the crushed and silenced witnessing communities, contemplated as utterly put down, and that as if for ever, and so regarded with intensest detestation and contempt. The place of exposure, "the street of the great city," forms a part of the symbol, and simply suggests that the citizens of this capital of Antichrist, "those who dwell on the earth," or who have their sole treasures and entire hearts there, are led to think of the extinction of these supposed enemies and to rejoice over it. "The great city" is here wonderfully and most truthfully described.

We have said it is the city of Christ, while retaining the name, turned into the city of Antichrist. Its true and standing name is not yet given. The name of "the great river Euphrates," on whose banks it shines in all worldly splendour, makes one anticipate it, as it will appear in subsequent visions, even "Babylon the great." Thus yet unnamed, it is here most significantly, but spiritually or figuratively described. *First*, it is called Sodom, indicating its fearful immorality and wickedness. *Secondly*, it is called Egypt, to set forth its crushing despotism and its holding the true Israel in a state of cruel bondage. And, *thirdly*, it is called by no actual name, though the name is infallibly pointed out by the description given—"where also their Lord was crucified." This was no mystic, but the literal, material city, with its actual apostate, persecuting, and Christ-crucifying inhabitants. The literal Sodom and the literal Egypt are meant, yet only as symbolically descriptive of the great antichristian city. The same holds good literally of Jerusalem; yet not as what it was intended to be and ought to have been, but what Christ Himself described it—the "Jerusalem which killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her," "where," as here said, He Himself "was crucified." Babylon the great shall resemble her in her opposition to the true messengers of Christ, and in crucifying Christ anew, or rather over and over again, in the presence of those who form His spiritual body, His true and faithful followers. This terrible description must be added to the other two, in order to our knowledge of "Babylon the great," or of the Church which boasts of being the one and only true Church of

Christ, and which is so entirely and so incurably self-deluded as not to know, that she is in very deed the Church of Antichrist.

7. *Vers.* 9, 10. "And from among the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations do (men) look upon their dead bodies three days and a half, and suffer not their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. And they that dwell on the earth rejoice over them, and make merry; and they shall send gifts one to another, because these two prophets tormented them that dwell on the earth."

The multitude of peoples forming the one kingdom of the beast, and deluded by antichristian doctrine, ever thinking that kingdom or their Church in danger, so long as one faithful Christian remains to show the true nature of that Church, than which there could not be a mightier and more marked contrast to their own, rejoice with exceeding joy when they hear of those whom they are taught to regard as most wicked heretics and dangerous enemies being put down by fire or by sword or with tortures; which are more than sufficient to prove that the agents are rightly described in the fifth trumpet-vision, as their great leader, called the Beast, is here declared to come from "the abyss." Of course this looking upon the dead bodies forms a part of the symbolical representation, and is to be taken simply to mean contemplating the witnessing community as silenced or extinguished for ever. This has been most amply illustrated by facts of ecclesiastical history. The refusal to bury or to permit them to be buried refers to what was sometimes done as expressive of abhorrence of those who were condemned as guilty of the most fearful of crimes. The silenced Church was treated in the spirit of such a method of showing intensest hatred of the condemned. "They that dwell on the earth," the same persons, descriptive of members of the false Church, as contrasted with true Christians, "whose citizenship is in heaven," whose hearts are there, and who are said elsewhere to "dwell in heaven," "rejoice over them, make merry," and, in token of gladness, "send gifts to one another." The grand cause of all this is declared to be the fact, that "these two prophets," these few and feeble, but true and faithful servants of Christ, "tormented them," gave no rest to their guilty consciences, reminded them of the evil and consequences of sin, set before them a higher and holier manner of living, and preached a gospel which they would not receive because they would not deny themselves and follow Him whose gospel it is.

8. *Vers.* 11, 12. "And after the three days and a half the breath of

life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet, and great fear fell upon them which beheld them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they went up into heaven in a cloud, and their enemies beheld them."

These faithful servants resembled the Lord, whose crucifixion seemed to put an end to all the troubles and anxieties of those who thought they would no more be tormented with His testimony against their evil deeds. For three days and three nights His sun was darkened in death. On the Cross of woe He had been exposed to awful contempt. His few and devoted followers in these endless days of spiritual darkness and cruel persecution had experienced, we might say, an almost endless crucifixion. They seemed now to be dead and to rise no more. Their sun had apparently set for ever. No one, it was thought, could equal the Beast or make successful war against him. The great city seemed to be impregnable and eternal. It was the glorious capital of many nations, on the way to become the capital of a universal empire, even that of the whole world. Men called it the Jerusalem of God. These witnesses had called it "the place where Satan's throne is." No wonder they were hated, killed and exposed to contempt, refused all decent burial, and themselves and their name made, if possible, to rot before the very eyes of the rejoicing and triumphant citizens. But, "after three days and a half," after there seemed not so much as the faintest shadow of a doubt that they would torment no more for ever "these dwellers in the earth," who called themselves "citizens of heaven," these dead bodies most wonderfully and most mysteriously began to move and to show symptoms of recovered life. "The spirit or breath of God had entered into them, and they stood upon their feet." Strange sight, appalling to those exultant enemies! "And great fear fell upon them which beheld them." What more truthful or more powerful picture could we have drawn of what we have, by the preceding words, been led to contemplate as the apparently complete and final suppression of the few and faithful Christians or Christian communities, which had for ages resisted the seductions and defied the power of that apostate Church, against which they had lived to protest, had been silenced and crushed for so protesting, and are again raised to new life and power, that their protestation may become clearer and more effectual than it ever had been before! All this has been illustrated by the history of the period here most assuredly referred to, when the well-called "dark ages" had come to their deepest darkness, when the few remaining sons of light had greatest reason to despair

of the return of the true and glorious gospel day, "the day of salvation" to themselves and the world, and yet when that day was about to dawn and "the Day Star" was about to arise and to shine for ever.

Hence we find it added that these restored witnesses "*heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither.*" A glorious and most effectual call. "*And they went up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.*" They ascended, like their risen Lord, in a cloud, a cloud of glory, the cloud of the Divine Presence, with the everlasting arms underneath and around them. Beautiful figure, and true as beautiful! The faithful and apparently annihilated communities, treated as the veriest enemies of Him for whom they had long been suffering the loss of all things, proclaimed to be most antichristian by Antichrist himself, by him who had dared to usurp the very throne and prerogatives of Christ and of God, are now raised to their proper place, clearly marked out by God as His own, and fully restored to their birthright lot in the kingdom of heaven. Those who so often fail to distinguish between the symbol and the thing symbolised will not be content with any such interpretation. They must have a literal death and a literal resurrection, a personal death and a personal resurrection, followed by a literal personal ascension to heaven. But, surely, it ought to satisfy every mind that in all this we have a sublime and significant picture of the fall and rise of the true Church, not only as the words most naturally imply, but also as we find most clearly and amply illustrated by ecclesiastical history. These dwellers on the earth, these professed citizens of heaven, the heaven of the Christian Church on earth, had persecuted and slain the true citizens of heaven or real dwellers in heaven, and so treated them as the most determined servants of the devil. God reverses their condemnation and gives impartial practical judgment in their favour, as here symbolised, and makes them rise and take their proper place in the kingdom of heaven or the Church of Jesus Christ.

That this is the correct view of this wonderful passage we seem to have evidence amounting to demonstration, when we consult the remarkable vision of Ezekiel, of which this is a striking parallel, and from which it is at least partially borrowed. We refer to chap. xxxvii., containing what is usually called "the vision of dry bones." That vision sets forth, in remarkable symbolic form, the state of Israel as completely disorganised and destroyed, and as no longer a nation on the earth. Underlying the whole is the idea of Israel

as a great army that had fought its last battle, and had perished under the deadly weapons of the triumphant foe. As here, the dead bodies had been unburied, but had remained till only countless bones could be seen scattered all over the field of conflict. The prophet is asked, "Can these bones live?"—meaning without a symbol, as we now know, "Can the crushed and annihilated house of Israel be possibly restored?" The case seemed as hopeless as that of these long-bleached bones. The answer was wise—"O Lord God, Thou knowest." They did live. Bone came to bone; body appeared after body. Breath from heaven entered, in obedience to the Almighty fiat, "Come from the four winds, O breath (or O Spirit), and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." They did live, and, we are told, in the very words here also employed, "they stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army." So our witnesses "stood up upon their feet," and, in figure raised to heaven, took again their exalted rank as the true witnesses of Jesus Christ. In the case of Israel, we are happily provided with a Divine explanation of the Divine symbolic vision: "Then said He, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; and we are clean cut off. . . . Behold, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, O my people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel." The right interpretation of the vision of the witnesses must correspond to this. It is fully warranted by it. The effect on those who witnessed this wonderful spiritual resurrection, this marvellous renewal of gospel prophecy or of witnessing for Christ, was that of terror. In their inmost consciousness they would cry with Ahab, as Elijah met him in the stolen garden, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?"

One thing we have left as yet unnoticed. The dead bodies remain unburied "for three days and a half." This of course corresponds to the time during which the witnesses were silent, or from the time when they were silenced to the time when they were enabled to come forth, and, with mightier voice than ever, to bear new witness to Christ and His true kingdom. Some, holding the year-day principle, have applied it to the time here specified, and have looked for some marked period of three years and a half immediately preceding the first outbreak of the great Reformation; and Mr. Elliott found, as he thought, just such an exact period between a proclamation in public Roman Council of the triumph of the Church of Rome over all her foes, or of the fact that no testimony was further raised against her claim to universality and

supremacy, and the grand and mighty proclamation of Luther against the authority of the Papal Church. The discovery of Elliott is certainly very wonderful, even though it must be acknowledged that, through forgetfulness of the difference between our year of 365 days and the prophetic year of this passage of only 360 days, he committed a slight error in his calculation, quite sufficient to prove almost, if not altogether, fatal to the application of the year-day principle to the case in hand, yet not preventing us from seeing at least how true to future fact is this vision of the completeness of the triumph of the paganised Church over the pure Church on the one hand, and of the speedy restoration of the pure Church to new life and power, as well as to a first, a visible and glorious victory over the paganised.

We think, however, that it is quite a mistake to apply the year-day principle to this period of three days and a half. We have seen that the year-day mode of symbolisation belongs to Daniel rather than to John, and that, if we are to apply it to all the times transferred from the prophecy of the one to that of the other, this does not warrant us in applying it to any period peculiar to John; and we may say, that, excepting the times just referred to, we do not know of another period in the whole Apocalypse to which we have a right, or it would be safe, to urge its application. Apart, in fact, from the times common to Daniel and John, we seem bound to put no definite interpretation on the symbolic numbers used, unless in so far as the circumstances of the case or the nature of things may seem justly to suggest; and even then we must make every allowance for that generality or indefiniteness which can hardly but be an essential feature of all prophecy relating to what, even in its historical fulfilment, can have no exactly determinable beginning or end. In the case of the vision of locusts we seemed to find a reason for the reference to five months in the fact that such was the length of the active life of these destructive insects. Here we seem to find a like sufficient reason for the specification of three days and a half in the fact that that period is neither longer nor shorter than could with any propriety be said of dead bodies unburied and contemptuously exposed to view. Observe, the bodies are in themselves real, only used symbolically to signify a totally different thing. All, then, that we are called to do in the way of discovering the real fulfilment is simply to inquire as to some time, longer or shorter, when the actual representatives of the Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ were put down and kept down by the perverted and persecuting Church, and then, to the

amazement and confusion of the latter, rose up, in new power, to give forth the old testimony of the New Testament to the crown and kingdom of Jesus Christ. That there was such a period, and that exactly where this most marvellous vision has placed it, can be doubted by none acquainted with the most undeniable facts of history.

9. *Ver. 13.* "And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell; and there were killed in the earthquake seven thousand persons: and the rest were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven."

A great convulsion followed. The great city was shaken to its very foundations. A mighty commotion arose within the bounds of the paganised Church. Masses of people were thoroughly shaken in their faith as to the so-called divine rights of the great king who had so long and with so high a hand ruled over the many peoples that formed his kingdom. "*A tenth part of the city fell.*" Babylon the great was no longer complete, and no longer certain, like the true Church of Christ, to remain. A large portion of the peoples, who used to bow to the sceptre of the despotic, persecuting, and falsely called Vicar of Christ and Lord of the world, fell away from their allegiance, and formed themselves into new communities acknowledging Christ alone as King and the New Testament as the only real statute-book of His kingdom. Multitudes besides simply withdrew from the great city, and sought new liberty and new prosperity under new polities of their own. In this way "a tenth part of the city fell."

The certainty of the fulfilment of this most marvellous prediction has been impaired by what we cannot but deem the mistaken and injudicious minute calculations of certain ardent supporters of this very interpretation. Broad undeniable facts are all that a sufficiently exact interpretation and proof or knowledge of fulfilment can really require. The present state of Europe, with the most general knowledge of Germany and England, is quite sufficient to demonstrate the truth of the simple words, "*and a tenth part of the city fell.*" What is intended by the next announcement, "*and there were killed in the earthquake seven thousand persons,*" we may not be able to determine. That a vast number, which might be thus symbolically represented, might have literally perished, might be all that is meant, or that we might be entitled to infer. Then the meaning of the vision would not be much affected by the words. If no better sense can be found, or if any interpretation would

involve the words in any degree of doubt, it is as wise as it is fair to seek to draw no more out of them.

However, as this period of the history of the corrupt Church of Christ so far corresponds with that in the history of the paganised house of Israel in the days of Elijah, it has been again and again suggested that there may be here an allusion to the 7000 unperverted Israelites who "had not bowed the knee to Baal," but had remained faithful to Jehovah the God of Israel. Now, if the fall of the tenth part of the city may justly be interpreted as the fall of a great part of the people represented by the city from allegiance to the destroyer of the witnesses, called "the Beast out of the abyss," may not the death of these seven thousand citizens symbolise something which would make them, in some symbolically consistent manner, resemble the seven thousand true-hearted Israelites referred to? How, for example, can a man be made alive to Christ but by being made dead to the world? Or, to reverse the order, how can a man be made dead to the world but by being made alive to Christ? All real Christian conversion, then, involves both a killing and a making alive. Hence the words of Paul—"I have been crucified," killed, "with Christ, yet I live . . . Christ liveth in me." So again, "Ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Why, then, may not spiritual death involving spiritual life be symbolised here? The meaning, then, would be that, when as many as might be represented by a tenth of the subjects of the beast completely threw off his authority, a large number, which might be symbolised by the seven thousand faithful Israelites, were made dead to the false, and alive to the true, King of the spiritual Israel. We can see no extravagance in all this. It would certainly consist with the facts of history. Many were thus both killed and made alive, and formed themselves into what they deemed Churches of Christ and of the New Testament.

And, besides, if this view be correct, it gives a key to the meaning of the otherwise seemingly unintelligible words which follow: "*And the rest were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.*" If these were the other inhabitants of the great city, who did not withdraw from it, then, though we may easily perceive how they should be affrighted, we cannot see how they should be said to to have given glory to the God of heaven. But, if by the rest is meant the rest of those who formed the tenth part which fell, then all seems simple and most wonderfully true to fact. The meaning would thus be that, whilst multitudes were separated from the empire of the expressly named "beast from the abyss," and formed

new and various kingdoms of their own, of these multitudes many were both killed and made alive, or were truly converted to Christ, whilst the rest were no more than struck with fear, saw all to be a work of more than human or earthly power, and so, ascribing it to God, "gave glory to the God of heaven." They protested strongly and sincerely against Antichrist, but they failed to become true Christians. We do not express any absolute certainty as to the correctness of this interpretation, but we know of no better, and think it may yet be found to be correct.

10. *Ver. 14.* "The second woe is past : behold, the third woe cometh quickly."

This marks a most important point in the course of this revelation. The first woe-trumpet introduced the most terrible perversion and perverting power of the Christian ministry, as symbolised by the frightful agency from the abyss. This woe is said to fall upon "them that dwell on the earth," on men not converted to God, especially on nominal but not real Christians. For these to be deprived of the true light or saving truth of heaven was a most awful calamity. The second woe-trumpet introduced the fearful result of the working of this agency from the abyss in the perversion and paganisation of the Christian Church, and the extension of that corrupt Church so as to include the multitudes of really heathen people symbolised by the waters of the great river, Euphrates, and forming the empire of the beast from the abyss, whose capital is the great city Babylon described in this chapter, but not fully named till further disclosures concerning it are made. As the perverted and perverting ministry increased in number and in power, the apostolic ministry proportionally decreased in both. And as the Church was more and more perverted and paganised by the false ministry, the true or apostolic Church became smaller and smaller.

All this is here set forth. That the mass of the Christian people should become pagan was a most terrible calamity to themselves, to all "them that dwell on the earth," to re-quote the descriptive words, in fact, to mankind at large. Such, together with the consequent war against the witnesses, is the second woe here referred to. In the rise of the agency from the abyss, as implied in the allusion in this chapter, and as more fully set forth afterwards, we have the real origin and character of the beast disclosed. He and his kingdom, though thus yet to be fully described, are to be regarded as long in existence and power,

before the time referred to in this announcement as the second woe. As we have seen, he had persecuted and put to death the true witnesses of Christ; and had, on their marvellous restoration, suffered the loss of a tenth or of a great part of his kingdom. God has thus begun to deal blow after blow at the power and empire of this Satanic usurper of the throne and dominion of the true Messiah. This is to be well marked, if we would understand the following chapters, if not the whole remaining part of the Book. The third and last woe is about to come; the seventh trumpet or third woe-trumpet is speedily to sound. That woe is set forth in the sixteenth chapter under the seven vials or bowls. It includes the completion of the destruction of the empire of the beast, the most remarkable beginning of which, in the fall of a tenth of the great city, we have been contemplating. Though an inconceivably vast blessing to the Church, and to the world through the Church, this is certainly a most terrible woe to "them that dwell on the earth," involving sufferings innumerable to the multitudes that will persist in their adherence to the delusive and deadly kingdom of the beast.

We have arrived at the time alluded to by the angel standing on the sea and on the earth: "In the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which He declared to His servants the prophets." When we read what follows the sounding of that angel, we might naturally infer that it should rather have been said, "when he shall have sounded," or, "when he shall have begun to sound"; for, immediately after, and not before, we are told, "they said, The kingdom of the world is become (the kingdom) of our Lord and of His Christ": words used by anticipation, because the great anti-christian empire is now to be destroyed, or the bowls with the last plagues are about to be poured out upon it. Such, then, would be our natural inference. The words of the angel are infallibly correct. Before the trumpet begins to blow, and not merely after, the grand disclosure of the mystery of the final and full triumph of the great and many-crowned Conqueror is clearly and certainly made, through what we find to have been previously done—namely, the resurrection of the witnesses, and the fall of so large a part of the great and hostile city. These two events declared as with a trumpet, and before this seventh trumpet began to sound, that God had now arisen, that now He had begun to fight, that now this first and great victory, displaying Divine and resistless power, assured all the risen or restored people of God of final

and glorious victory. This very thought is expressed after the sounding began by the four and twenty elders: "We give Thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty . . . because Thou hast taken Thy great power, and didst reign." In seeing that great power taken and the Divine reign renewed in what we have called the first great victory, these elders saw the end in the beginning of the war, and so they thanked God as if the war were already brought to a triumphant conclusion.

THE SEVENTH TRUMPET.

11. *Vers. 15-18.* "And the seventh angel sounded; and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said, The kingdom of the world is become (the kingdom) of our Lord, and of His Christ: and He shall reign for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sit before God on their thrones, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, which art and which was; because Thou hast taken Thy great power, and didst reign. And the nations were wroth, and Thy wrath came, and the time of the dead to be judged, and (the time) to give their reward to Thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to them that fear Thy name, the small and the great; and to destroy them that destroy the earth."

In treating of the oath of the strong angel and his declaration as to the finishing of "the mystery of God," we have so far dealt with this most important passage already. We have referred to the fact that the work of fully "destroying the destroyers," not only of the earth, but of the saints of God, as elsewhere set forth, has by no means been completed as these words would at first suggest. This is the third woe-trumpet, but the woe has yet to come. Of that woe having actually come, we never read, as we do of the other two. There was no need of further announcement. The woe comes in all its terrors when the bowls of Divine wrath, the seven last plagues, doubtless of this trumpet, have been poured out on the enemy, over whom we have been led to contemplate the first mighty and most significant victory. Because we have no fewer than three chapters introduced before the pre-announcement of these plagues is made in the fifteenth chapter, we are apt to conclude that, between the sounding of the trumpet and the pouring out of the bowls, there must be some long and unaccountable delay, seemingly contradictory of the strong angel's solemn asseveration. This is by no means the case. These three chapters have to do with no such seeming, but unreal, intervening time, but are descrip-

tive of what pertains to the period of the two woe-trumpets already treated of. Thus the beast out of the abyss is already spoken of, spoken of as already existent, and as already successful in crushing the prophetic witnesses on the one hand, and as, on the other, already meeting with his first terrible disaster in the loss of the tenth part of his kingdom. Till this mighty enemy has been fully described, and his deadly war against the saints clearly made known, the vision of the bowls could not possibly be understood. The thirteenth chapter, accordingly, belongs to the same period as that of the ninth, tenth, and eleventh; only it carries us further down in the succession of events. The twelfth chapter is absolutely necessary for the understanding of the thirteenth; and so must have been thus introduced. The fourteenth chapter stands in the same relation to the twelfth and thirteenth as do the tenth and eleventh in relation to the ninth, the true Church in both cases being set forth in connection with the false, and in contrast with it.

In the words before us, then, we are led to contemplate a most important crisis in this Apocalyptic history of the Christian Church and of the great apostasy. That apostasy has been fully developed, and has reached its full predicted triumph over the Church, viewed as witnessing for Christ, in crushing which the power of the beast is seen at its very zenith. In the loss of a large part of his kingdom, that power is seen to have got past that zenith, and begun to descend. In seeing this we see the grand crisis of his reign. And now, as bowl after bowl is poured out, resistless blow after blow is dealt by the Almighty hand against His doomed dominion. As said again and again, the first stroke produced so vast a result, in the fall of so much of the great city, that the Great Deliverer, however Himself unseen, had clearly shown that He had most certainly come, and, as we have said, the end was triumphantly seen in the beginning. Just as, in the case of a nation crushed under the iron hoof of some foreign and powerful usurper of the throne, if the rightful and benevolent king appeared on the field of battle with an evidently resistless army, and, by the first overwhelming victory, conspicuously showed his transcendent might, the oppressed people would most joyfully anticipate the issue, and act as if their deliverance were complete or had already come. Hence the "great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdom of the world is become (the kingdom) of our Lord, and of His Christ": and, as the anticipated conquest involves this very thing, the kingdom of the world becoming the kingdom of Christ, with no such antichristian enemy to rise and reign again, it is grandly added, "And He shall reign for ever

and ever." The four and twenty elders, representatives of the whole true Israel of God, breathing this spirit of exultant anticipation, and treating the end as already come, gratefully and most reverently exclaim, "We give Thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, which art and which wast; because Thou hast taken Thy great power, and didst reign." Seeing the Almighty arm made bare for war, even in the opening campaign they cannot but see, as if already before their very eyes, the final and most glorious issue. They see Him sitting on His throne and doing a most awful part of His regal work, even that of righteous, and, in this case, most dreadful judgment. "*Thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead to be judged, and (the time) to give their reward to Thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to them that fear Thy name; and to destroy them that destroy the earth.*" These words clearly show that the elders regarded the end as coming, and not as yet come.

Mark the expression used—"Thou hast taken Thy great power and didst reign," evidently implying that here we have as it were a new beginning of the redemptive work. Most mysteriously Jehovah had long apparently ceased to carry on this His peculiar work. Long had He apparently yielded to the great usurper, and permitted him to destroy that very work in the destruction of His own poor and persecuted saints. The conquest of Christ over the pagan world seemed absolutely lost by the restoration of Paganism within the pale of His own Church. The King of Zion appeared to have been dethroned and to have utterly lost His own kingdom. He who came down from heaven to reign has seemingly been superseded by one who has come up from the abyss to usurp, in the very name of His expressly appointed Vicar or representative, that Messianic throne. The time is therefore most appropriately set forth as one of special judgment. Condemnation is anticipated: "Thy wrath is come." Against whom? Certainly against those on whom the bowls of Divine wrath are about to be poured,—not on the world at large, but on the antichristian kingdom of the beast. Vindication is also anticipated. For whom? For the prophets and saints, and all who fear the name of the Great King and Judge, even all "the dead," whom the beast has wasted and destroyed. Part of this sentence of vindication has already, in the resurrection of the witnesses, been gloriously executed. The martyred witnessing Church has thus been rewarded. All the patient sufferings of many generations have been most amply acknowledged in the new rise and triumph of the fallen kingdom of Christ. When that

triumph has been completed, that reward will be seen to be perfect. This day of judgment, this mighty crisis in the history of the Church, we find revealed to Daniel, and through him to us, in that most marvellous and most comprehensive vision which is recorded in the seventh chapter of his prophecy, and which, we cannot possibly doubt, points especially to the very time here set before us. There the antichristian power appears in the form of a little horn: here in that of a wild beast. All must acknowledge their identity, who study the words of Daniel and those of John in his thirteenth chapter. Both make war with the saints and prevail against them; and both have authority or reign for exactly the same time—three years and a half or forty and two months.

Let us quote the words of the earlier prophet: "And I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints and prevailed against them; until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. . . . And he shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High. . . . And they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and half a time. But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High: His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him." There cannot, then, be a shadow of a doubt that these words and those now considered relate to one and the same time, to one and the same thing. The two help to explain one another. In the case of Daniel, the crisis was seen from afar; in the case of John, it is described as already come. What goes before, and which we have been considering, enables us to fix, within certain general limits, the relative date of the great crisis or judgment intended. It comes after the rise of apostolic or New Testament Christianity. It comes before the first grand disaster to the antichristian Church. It comes, in fact, as the many successive blows, ending in complete overthrow, are about to be dealt to that Church, as is implied in the thanks expressed,—*"Thou hast taken Thy great power, etc."* In thus judging of what we may call comparative times, we must not fall into the too common and fatal error of treating what is described apparently as a single event, occurring in a short period of time, so literally as to exclude the real idea intended of possibly a very long time and very prolonged course of action. Thus Antichrist took a long time to rise, and

doubtless will take a long time to pass away. This judgment may require not a few centuries for its full and final execution. The war may seem sometimes to waver, as if the infallibly doomed enemy were again rising to old power, and even threatening to gain the victory. We need not say more ; only we may decidedly affirm that no interpretation of this Book which does not proceed on the principle of the identity of this time of judgment and that of Daniel can possibly be correct. This identity, then, should be kept in view in the treatment of all that follows. Here Daniel's prophecy is fully introduced, unerringly interpreted, and more largely and definitely exhibited. This will be found as we consider those chapters which may be said to be a grand parenthesis between this and that of the vials or bowls.

VI.

CHAPTERS XII., XIII., XIV.

WE put these important chapters together as all belonging to one and the same thing, or as forming one special portion of the Apocalypse. As already said, they may be regarded as interposed between the sounding of the seventh or last woe-trumpet and the realisation of that woe by the pouring out of the seven bowls of Divine indignation or execution of the judgment of the Almighty King referred to at the close of chap. xi. The kingdom of the beast had to be described, in order that the real enemy of Christ and His people might be known, and that it might be seen on whom or on what the bowls of wrath were really poured out. In doing so it was necessary to go farther back in the history of redemption, and to set forth the grand warfare of the ages referred to in the first promise of deliverance, after the seduction of our race by the malicious subtlety of Satan. In fact, in the twelfth and thirteenth chapters we have a symbolic representation of that most condensed and wonderful prophetic history of the conflict of the ages between the woman and the serpent, between her seed and his seed: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: He shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel." Then, as the enemy called the beast had been described in the thirteenth chapter, most appropriately "the Seed of the woman," referred to in chap. xii. 2-5, appears as the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, with His hundred and forty and four thousand sealed and faithful followers, by whom the empire of the beast was destined to be overthrown. These three chapters, in fact, are thus closely connected, and they occupy the only proper place for them in this marvellous Book, the real order of which has too often been entirely missed; so that what is in reality a perfect organic whole, with one spirit pervading it, is too apt to appear more a chaos than a cosmos. When that order is perceived a most valuable key to the general meaning is found. We shall now proceed.

I.

CHAPTER XII.

*VISION OF THE WOMAN ARRAYED WITH THE SUN,
HER DIVINE MAN-CHILD, AND THE GREAT RED
DRAGON; OR THE FIRST TRIUMPH OF PRIMITIVE
CHRISTIANITY OVER THE HEATHEN WORLD.*

I. *Ver.* 1. "And a great sign was seen in heaven : a woman arrayed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars."

Of the various views taken of this sublime and marvellous vision, we seem fully assured that the only one which, in the light of all the details, can stand thorough investigation, is that which regards this woman as representing the true Church or kingdom of God in all the ages of the world. The two great signs—the woman and the dragon—carry our minds back, as already said, to Eden and the first promise of redemption: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed." To this a reference is here made, just as, in the fourth chapter, the symbolism carries us back to the same period. If we would understand the entire vision, we must keep this in mind. Literally the promised Seed was not to be a son of Eve herself. He was certainly to descend from her. Here she, and all like her, not as fallen, but as converted and renewed, no longer the friend but the foe of Satan and of sin, according to the promise "I will put enmity between thee and the woman," forming the true people or Church of God in all after times, are strikingly symbolised. This is in keeping with the figurative language of the Old Testament, in which Zion, Jerusalem, the people of Israel, the kingdom or Church of Jehovah, is often spoken of under the form of a woman. The whole of this chapter proves that such is the mother of the Child here said to rule the nations with "a rod of iron." Unless possibly in the way of a mere side allusion, the Virgin Mary cannot be intended. The statements as to the flight of this woman into the wilderness, and as to the "rest of her seed who keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus," are absolutely exclusive of this. Nor can the ancient Church of Israel, whether viewed literally or ideally, be alone meant, and that for these two same reasons. Let us assume

that the true Church of all ages, in this Book treated as "the Israel of God," is meant; and we are persuaded that all real difficulty or objection will pass away.

We would here repeat that such symbols usually, if not always, represent the object symbolised at the maximum of its development. This is strikingly the case with both objects here represented. Satan is represented, as we shall find in due course, as he is described throughout this Book and throughout the whole Bible, not at one period alone, but from beginning to end of his hostile work. His seven heads, with their seven diadems, point to the present and the past, as the uncrowned horns point to the distant future, when they too shall have ten diadems. Of course he is represented as here acting at one special period. One special period, too, of the woman's history is symbolised. Still, the woman herself is the true Church of all time. The whole conflict between the two is thus presented to our view. She is the mother of all Christians, as she is here set forth as the mother of Christ. Under another figure Paul thus alludes to her: "The Jerusalem that is above is free, which is our mother."

The sign is said to be "in heaven,"—the visible heavens, not the heaven to which her Son was caught, as is evident from her clothing and her position; implying that she represents the Church on earth, and not that in glory. "*She is arrayed with the sun,*"—with no earthly splendour, but with the pure light of a higher sphere, the light of the "Sun of righteousness," the light of truth and of God. "*The moon is under her feet.*" The exact meaning of this may be somewhat doubtful. We cannot think that the moon represents what is under her control. It is rather that which upholds her than that which she upholds. Some would refer to the older dispensation, which might be compared to the moon, as the new might be compared to the sun. As a matter of fact, the true Church is supported by the inferior light of prophecy and clothed with "the perfect light of the gospel of the glory of the blessed God." Still, the woman symbolically combines in her one person the Church of both dispensations. Let us not give way to the spirit of guessing, or of mere conjecture. Far better, let us acknowledge that we do not know. The data may not be sufficient for certain inference. One thing we do well to note at least: This woman standing on the moon, and thus not on the earth or of the earth, is to be contrasted with the woman sitting on the wild beast with all the tokens of moral and spiritual corruption: the one the true and the pure Church of God; the other the false and the

impure synagogue of Satan. We cannot far err, if we treat this woman, and the Church which she represents, as not of this world, as arrayed in no worldly light, and as upheld by no earthly power. "*Upon her head a crown of twelve stars.*" She is a queen. She wears a crown, but not of gold, not set with bright and costly diamonds, of no meretricious ornament, of no human manufacture, but the rich and beautiful work of the great Creator: "a crown of twelve stars," doubtless the queenly crown of the twelve tribes of the true Israel of God.

2. *Ver. 2.* "And she was with child: and she crieth out, travailing in birth, and in pain to be delivered."

Unless inclusively, this does not refer to the literal birth of Jesus Christ. As truly as He was "the Son of Mary," He was the Son or "Seed of the woman," or, as we have said, of the true Israel of God, the Church of all ages, but born at this special time. This Son was specially the Son of Divine promise. For His birth and gracious coming to save mankind the first provision made may be said to have been the first promise given, to which we have above referred, and which is connected with an express declaration as to the great Antichrist set forth in this vision, by whom woman and Child would be fiendishly opposed, and, if possible, utterly destroyed. As promise after promise was added, received, retained, and made a source of spiritual life, hope and joy, the preparatory work advanced. In the Old Testament we have a continuous and unbroken history of this mystically represented Church or people of God. All who formed the outward community may never have been, without exception, true sons and daughters of redeemed, converted, renewed mother Eve. But along the line of the professing Church there ever was the corresponding stream of promise, ever deepening, ever widening with every new prediction or additional revelation of the promised One, the Son of Divine promise. Of course we use the word Church in this place with a very general meaning. As said, many unreal children of God may have had a visible membership, which yet did not disprove her reality. But when these so multiplied, and so departed from the knowledge and service of Jehovah, and so neglected or lost the redemptive promises as to turn aside to a false religion—for example, to the worship of Baal, as in the time of Elijah—then they are no longer to be identified with this prospective mother of the Son of the Highest, this woman of Divine light and life, of special and ever-advancing revelation from heaven, of all-animating faith in the greatest of all

the promises, and so of longing and hopeful anticipation as to its glorious fulfilment.

3. *Vers.* 3, 4. "And there was seen another sign in heaven, and behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his heads seven diadems. And his tail draweth the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth : and the dragon stood before the woman which was about to be delivered, that when she was delivered, he might devour her child."

We have said that this awful sign or symbol, like the glorious one of the woman, carries our minds back to the very beginning of the redemptive history, and, we may add, leads us to contemplate the whole history of the fearfully antagonistic power symbolised in its relation to the work of redemption and to the Blessed Redeemer, or to the woman and her seed of every age, from that beginning down to the time of the millennial reign of Christ and Christians all over the world. We do not require to ask what or who is meant by this dreadful symbol. We are expressly told,— "the great dragon, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world": words which give the true key to this and to much of the other symbolic visions of this Book. They confirm, by the one expression, "the old serpent," what we have said of the symbol carrying our minds back to Eden or the lost Paradise itself. Jesus expressly calls him "the prince of this world." As such he encountered this true Prince of God, and sought His destruction by delusively and seductively offering Him "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them," on the one seemingly easy condition of falling down and worshipping him, the one condition of committing the seemingly smallest sin in order to make the greatest possible earthly gain, the gain of the whole world. If success had followed this daring passage of arms, "The Bright and Morning Star" would have been numbered with those "stars of heaven" which the serpent is here said to "draw with his tail and to cast down to the earth."

Again, the same evil one is called by Paul "the god of this world, the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience"; whilst John says concerning him, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the evil one." Such are the views of this dread one given throughout the Scriptures, to which we may add one more from the lips of his true Antagonist,— "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and stood not in the truth, because there is no truth in him."

"A sign in heaven"—the visible heavens, the firmament above, not of the divine abode. He was there as a mighty potentate, exalted among the stars which represent kings or princes or ruling powers. Especially do the heavens represent the sphere of religion, true or false, here regarded as true, but occupied by Satan, the arch-deceiver as to God and the things of God. *"A great red dragon,"* a serpent of united cruelty and cunning, the deceiver of our first parents, the deceiver of mankind, the defamer or blasphemer of God and of Christ; and the false accuser of all the true servants of Christ and of God.

"Having seven heads and ten horns." This is doubtless a most important part of the symbol or sign. Why seven heads? Some here suppose as a mark of fearful usurpation, even that of resembling the Spirit of God symbolised by the seven lamps. However, this is really worse than mere fancy. This symbol is far from resembling what the evil spirit would ever give or assume as a picture of himself. It is the true, but awful picture of him which the Spirit of truth has drawn and held up for the terror and the warning of the children of men whom he has so deceived and destroyed. Had there not been ten horns as well as seven heads, we might still have kept by the idea of completeness, so frequently expressed by this number in this Book,—the completeness, or, as we might say, the very perfection of evil: *"The evil one."* However, something different is intended. Satan is viewed as the spirit, ruling spirit, indwelling spirit of the whole world,—as already quoted, *"the spirit which worketh in the sons of disobedience."* That world, so inhabited, so inspired, so animated, so led, we have there set before our eyes in the form of this mighty monster. The body represents the whole. The heads represent so many nations, kingdoms, empires, in and through which Satan has lived and reigned on earth from the earliest times, and all more or less hostile, like himself or as animated by himself, to the children, people, Israel or Church of God in all ages, and, as we have been considering, symbolised by the woman before whom, as an enemy and a destroyer, he stands. Here we cannot enter into the full proof of this; but we feel assured that it will appear correct as we go on to treat this complex symbol, and as we treat of the wild beasts of the thirteenth and seventeenth chapters.

In fact, we have here an entirely new picture of what is wanting to make the prophecy of Daniel complete of the reign of Satan in and through the kingdoms to which he refers. He begins, most naturally, with Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon. This vision of John

carries us farther back. The prophecy of Daniel is about to be employed for the purpose of further revelation, to be altered in mere form, but to be enlarged and made the vehicle of widest representation of the great contest of all ages between "the Seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent." Accordingly, as Daniel begins with Babylon, John begins with Egypt—the first world-power by which Israel or the people of God were crushed and enslaved. Then we have the empire of Assyria; and then those of Daniel—Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome; and finally a seventh, of which it is said, chap. xvii. 10, that it "is not yet come; and when he," king for kingdom, "cometh, he must continue a little while." We know that other meanings have been put on these words. We do not know a better than that here indicated. Five of these had fallen; the sixth, Rome, then was; and the last and short-lived one would follow after. This is so far borne out by what is here added, even "ten horns," clearly connecting, and to a great extent identifying, this significant figure with that of the fourth or Roman beast of Daniel, one characteristic of which is to have ten horns, which both in Daniel and in this Book are said to be ten kings or kingdoms in some way connected with and rising out of the fourth or Roman. Thus John here unites all the heads and horns in one complex whole, making them one continued and varied dominion of the great red dragon, or seducer of mankind. In order to present a full historical, symbolic representation of the entire contest between the one Divine kingdom and the chief earthly kingdoms, the former under God and the promised Seed of the woman, and the latter under the first tempter and continued enemy of our race, seven heads and ten horns had thus to be included in the expressive symbol.

"*And upon his heads seven diadems,*" signifying seven empires or dominions, as we have said. These empires are all pagan, or of such false religion as is everywhere traced in Scripture to the spiritual delusion of Satan. The diadems represent actual dominions, kingdoms or empires. The horns are uncrowned, chiefly because all were then in the future. One of the heads was also in the future, but yet had a diadem, because, we suppose, pagan like the others, and also because, being pagan, they are viewed as directly under the rule of the dragon; much more likely, perhaps, because then existing, though not yet connected with the Church. Be this as it may, the entire succession of pagan empires, historically connected with the kingdom of God, is here presented as the kingdom of the evil one.

"*And his tail draweth the third part of the stars of heaven, and*

did cast them to the earth." We confess this is not to be so easily or so certainly interpreted as the parts of the symbol already considered. It has been thought to refer to the fall of Satan from his original state of perfection, and to the actual result of the exercise of his subtle power in the seduction of those other angels, usually called his. We are assured we have here no reference to such a vast and most mysterious subject. His angels, in the words which follow, are virtually said to be in this heaven with him, and to be cast down to the earth along with him. The real reference is to the heaven of this world, and not to the heavens of the long past. The stars cast down must surely be those to whom he was previously hostile. We cannot agree with Alford that the mode of expression, "draweth after him," indicates that this is a characteristic of him. The words which follow show that actual fact is meant, as he is said actually to have cast the stars down from the heaven to the earth. This seems to have been overlooked. Now, as stars are again and again suggestive of kings or ruling powers, why should we not suppose such to have been intended? As the woman symbolising the kingdom of heaven on earth is certainly represented as in her proper and most highly exalted place, as we have said, in the sphere of religion, the stars referred to may surely be regarded as in their proper place also before they were drawn away by the great deceiver and seducer, and therefore naturally representative of the ruling powers or rulers of the kingdom of God. The place of the dragon rightly belongs to such alone. Representative of false religion, he has usurped the place of the true, and naturally seeks or has sought to draw them after him and away from their Divine Lord and King, and that with such success that he was able to draw them out of their sphere, to destroy their faith in God and allegiance to Him, and so to cast them down to the earth, or to make them no longer profess and uphold the revealed truth of the God of Redemption, the God of Israel. In this case the reference would be to the seduction of the rulers and nation of Israel, not only immediately before the birth of Christ, but through the past history of Israel. We know of no others to whom he could thus be represented as expressly hostile. If the line of the past and not one special period is intended, then we would allow some force to the inference of Alford. We give this interpretation simply as the only one which has occurred as at all in keeping with the whole symbolism; and would only add that the real and satisfactory interpretation of this Book, or perhaps of any other, can never much depend upon any such mere detail.

"And the dragon stood before the woman which was about to be delivered, that when she was delivered, he might devour her child." Some have supposed a reference here to the desire of Herod the Great to destroy the Child of whose birth he had heard from the Magi, who had come to worship Him, asking, "Where is he that is born king of the Jews?" Fear of a possible rival, stirred up by Satan, may have prompted him so to act. We need not deny some possible side allusion to this, but we cannot regard it as really meant by this act of the dragon. The allusion is to his deadly enmity to the Seed of the woman, his greatest Antagonist, the "Destroyer of the works of the devil." Of course, in form all is symbol, yet symbol containing deepest meaning. The kingdoms of God and Satan, of good and evil, of holiness and sin, are in irreconcilable opposition to one another. If the one is to live, the other must die. We shall add here only generally that the words set clearly before our minds all that we read of in the New Testament of all that Satan did, whether directly and personally in the way of temptation, or indirectly and through the chief priests and rulers, and the people misguided by them, in opposition to Christ and the great work of salvation which He came to do.

4. *Ver. 5.* "And she was delivered of a son, a man-child, who is to rule the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up unto God, and unto His throne."

Unless inclusively, this does not refer to literal or natural birth. As already said, the Church and not Mary is meant by the mother; and so by the child is meant, not the infant, but the man, and not the mere man, but the Messiah, and that as we find so clearly brought out in the second Psalm, to which reference is here most certainly made: "Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee. Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the nations for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." (Evidently, if they persistently oppose; and hence what follows.) "Now, therefore, be wise, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve Jehovah with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son" (the Son "this day" begotten of Jehovah), "lest He be angry, and ye perish in the way, for His wrath will (or may) soon be kindled. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." Here this Son is declared to be the King of the whole earth. Kings and all rulers and people are called upon to acknowledge His Divine authority by giving the kiss of

loving and faithful allegiance. Then shall they be blessed, even all who put their trust in Him; and the iron rod will not be applied. His banner over all true subjects is Love. He has a golden sceptre, but no iron rod for them. What, then, are we to understand by this glorious birth?

As we have hinted, it was the birth of Jesus, in all the fulness and perfection of His Messiahship, which did not begin with His birth of Mary, nor till after the whole course of His life, with all its sinless excellence, all its significant and divinely sealing miracles, and all its superhuman teachings and heavenly spirit, nay, nor till after His great sacrificial death, apart from which Jehovah could never have said, as in the words of the same Psalm, "I have set My king upon My holy hill of Zion." At the very earliest, this wondrous birth cannot be dated before the day of His glorious resurrection from the dead, when, as Paul has said, "He was declared [to be] the Son of God with power." So, too, Peter clearly taught, Acts xiii. 32, 33, "And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers, how that God hath fulfilled the same unto His children, in that He raised up Jesus" ("again," A.V.); "as also it is written in the second Psalm, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee." The fact that these words were addressed to the Anointed of Jehovah proves the reference to be to the regal rather than the natural birth; and this is in keeping with what we find in a corresponding reference in Ps. lxxxix. 27 to David, the type as well as father of the true Messiah,—“I will make him [My] firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.” This alone consists with the entire symbolism; for if the mother be mystic, so must be the birth. It is specially in harmony with what is added as to the child being caught up unto heaven, as if no life of toil and suffering, far less a violent death, followed the birth referred to. The whole may, we think, be put very simply thus:—When that time came, when all the promises made to the woman and cherished by her were fulfilled in the perfect preparation of Jesus to be the Saviour and King of men, and, as such, to take His place on His Father's throne, then came the wondrous birth here symbolised, or then Jehovah practically and really declared, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," which day we can well suppose to have been no other than the day of His resurrection.

"*Who is to rule the nations with a rod of iron,*"—words which not only point to the Messiah of the second Psalm, but which seem infallibly to point to Jesus Christ, the true David, and to

Him alone. We cannot but regard that as a most miserable, we can hardly refrain from saying, a most hateful, interpretation, which some of even our best interpreters have maintained, and which supposes the triumph of Christianity over Paganism to be here intended, and the elevation of Constantine the Great, "a son of the Church," to the throne of the Roman Empire. What a substitute for the throne of God! and what a substitute for the Child of promise, the Child of God! Also, what a substitute for Him who was to rule the nations with a rod of iron unless they acknowledged His Messiahship, and as to whom the sacred oracle could assure the whole world, "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him!" The triumph of Christianity came ages after this "male Child," this Mighty Infant, was raised to the Divine throne, and was the grand result of the war which followed, and which is here represented as the war between Michael and the dragon. The day of resurrection and the day of ascension may, to all intents, be viewed as here alluded to. In that preparation for the Messiahship which preceded this day of mystic regal birth was included all the personal warfare between Christ and Satan, such as that of the temptation in the wilderness, and that of the hostility of the world, of which Jesus called Satan the prince, in which He went on from victory to victory, and to which He so sublimely refers in the epistles to the Churches in Thyatira and Laodicea,—“He that overcometh . . . to him will I give authority over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to shivers; as I also have received of My Father,”—and, “He that overcometh, to him will I give to sit down with Me in My throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with My Father in His throne.” These words, we may safely say, give the most ample confirmation to the view above given of an express and sole reference to Christ Himself, and not to Constantine the Great or to any Christian ruler or Christian people. Like ample confirmation might be said to be found in the vision of the war which is immediately afterwards set forth as following this elevation of Christ to His Father’s throne.

5. *Ver. 6.* “And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that there they may nourish her a thousand two hundred and threescore days.”

At first sight one would infer that this flight immediately succeeded the mystic birth. However, this seems by no means to be the case. Evidently the same flight is again spoken of,

ver. 14; proving that very much took place, and possibly a long period of time elapsed, between the one event and the other. The main design of this anticipatory announcement may have been to point emphatically to the fact, that the Satanic hatred of the true Church remained unalterably the same. Of this flight we shall treat again.

6. *Vers. 7-12.* "And there was war in heaven : Michael and his angels (going forth) to war with the dragon ; and the dragon warred and his angels ; and they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world ; he was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him. And I heard a great voice in heaven, saying, Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ : for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accuseth them before our God day and night. And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony ; and they loved not their life even unto death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and ye that dwell in them ! Woe for the earth and for the sea : because the devil is gone down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time."

(1) "*And there was war in heaven.*" This followed the enthronement of "the male Child," "the Seed of the woman, the Son of God, the Messiah or Anointed King of the true spiritual Israel of God. Here, in this symbolic history of the conflict of good and evil, we reach the very point set forth, under a totally different symbolic form, the enthronement of the Lamb, in the vision of the fifth chapter. There He appears, with all the marks of recent death ; yet in the fulness of restored life, as the great Propitiation for human sin, takes the mystic book out of the hand of Him who sits upon the throne, and, amidst the adorations of the heavenly world, takes His appointed place at the right hand of God and on that "glorious high throne." Then, as we were led to contemplate, He proved His own predicted glorification, by sending down the promised Spirit, by the conversion of thousands on the Day of Pentecost, and thus by the first and ever memorable and encouraging victory in the opening war between Himself and Satan, between His Church and the world, between "the rest of the seed of the woman," and the same old serpent, even him "that deceiveth the whole world." In this vision we have the very same war set forth under a different form. "The male Child" has proved Himself to be fully prepared for taking, as the Messiah of

Jehovah and of Israel, His appointed place on His Father's throne, not only, as just referred to, because of His wonderful Self-sacrifice, but also, as we found Him saying to the Church in Thyatira, because He "had overcome," had overcome the world and the prince of the world through all His life, and emphatically in His very death. For this second reason enthroned, the same war, begun on the Day of Pentecost, is here set forth, though, because of the unlike symbolism, the identity has not been recognised by not a few interpreters. In the one case we have the Holy Spirit, and the apostles inspired by Him, beginning the holy war, and triumphing gloriously on the first well-fought field. Here it is symbolically, but most consistently, set forth as a war in heaven, and between angelic beings, good and evil angels, whose mighty leaders are Michael on the one hand and Satan on the other. Just because of this peculiar symbolism, the strangest conceptions of this great war have been entertained and expressed by those whose chief mistakes have arisen from the too common error of mistaking the symbols of this Book for the things symbolised. As already brought out, heaven here is the heaven of this world, the visible heavens regarded as the sphere of religion, properly the sphere of true religion alone, but, through the agency of Satan, or through his deception of mankind, the sphere, at this time and from primitive times, occupied by all the forms of more or less false religion. Keeping this in view, this terrible mystic war of the angels, good and bad, will be the more easily and correctly understood.

(2) "*Michael and his angels (going forth) to war with the dragon; and the dragon warred and his angels.*" Here there is no reference to the rebellion of "the angels which kept not their first estate." In that case they were the aggressors or assailants, and Michael and his angels, if ever so engaged, the defendants and conquerors. Here Michael and his angels begin the strife. Satan and his angels have long held, though most unjustly, the larger space in what ought to have been the sphere of true religion alone. Michael and his angels represent the true religion, that of Jehovah and of Israel, and therefore, here, of Christ and His new kingdom. Just as Christ gave His commission, on the ground of all power and authority in heaven as well as on earth being given to Him, to go into all the world and preach the gospel, and thus to begin the aggressive war on the kingdom of darkness or of Satan; so, here, Michael the archangel, the representative of the exalted Redeemer, begins this great aggressive war on Satan and his angelic hosts.

"Michael and his angels." We must inquire more fully as to this great spirit. In Jude 6 he is spoken of as the archangel; and we never read elsewhere of any other so called. The only other book in which he is alluded to is that of Daniel, from which he seems to be introduced into this. In Daniel x. 13 he is called "one of the chief princes," which would rather suggest the idea of more than one archangel. In chap. x. we are told of one "clothed in linen," and altogether such as to prove that He was none other than the Divine High Priest of Rev. i., the Head of the Christian Church, walking amongst the golden candlesticks. This Christ of Daniel speaks of Michael and his relation to Him, and also to the people of Daniel; so that we are thus furnished with a key to the real character of the leader who is here said to contend with Satan and to cast him down to the earth. This Christ of Daniel says to him, "I am come for thy words' sake. But the Prince of Persia" (seemingly an evil angel) "withstood me one and twenty days; but, lo, Michael . . . came to help me." He is a servant, then, and helper of the Son of God. The same Christ of Daniel adds, "there is none that holdeth with me . . . but Michael your prince,"—the prince, then, of the House of Israel. Again, Dan. xii. 1, "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people." Michael, then, the archangel, the great servant and angelic commander of those spiritual hosts that stand up and fight for the true Messiah and the true Israel of God, is here introduced as beginning a new war against Satan. He does so when Christ is glorified and seated on His Father's throne, and doubtless not at the suggestion of his own mind, but as commissioned or commanded by the newly crowned King of the true Israel of God.

Hence the war in question. In the name of Christ, this newly crowned Conqueror and King, Michael gathers his invincible forces, all clothed in Divine and heavenly light, to go forth to war with Satan and his mighty hosts, all shrouded in darkness, and all out of their proper place. The former represent the saints of God or followers of Christ on earth. The latter represent the whole world lying in the wicked one. The battle is soon described, and seemingly soon ended in the total defeat of the great deceiver. Still, the war was of no one day or one year, but one of many ages, as the context clearly demonstrates. This great war is quite in harmony with the whole representation of Scripture as to the angelic world, or world of holy and unfallen angels and world of fallen and unholy angels. The latter, under the leadership of Satan, are everywhere spoken of as hostile to the highest and best interests of mankind.

The former, under God or under Christ, are all devoted to the service of men, and expressly called "ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation." The two armies, here met in terrible conflict, are in a state of eternal hostility to one another. If we would fully understand the nature of this great contest, we must remember that Satan, with those on his side, is engaged in the fearful work of deceiving, tempting, misleading and enslaving the minds and hearts of men. As he seeks to darken these minds and to pervert the higher or divine nature of men, he may be said to live and move and fight in the spiritual sphere, the heaven of this human world. So, as Michael and his angels work in the same sphere, or seek the spiritual well-being of the human race, they also may be said to live and move and fight there. How angelic or superhuman beings can influence the minds of men, can tempt them to do evil or encourage them to do good, we may never comprehend. In this way the nature of this warfare we may never understand. Thus far we may know, that it is not to be viewed as direct and literal—nay, apparently physical rather than moral and spiritual. We must not interpret the symbolic as if it were literal. The real fight is for and against mankind. The real field of battle is within the minds and hearts of men. This we shall find, when we come to treat of the real persons engaged, of their real weapons of war, and of the actual victory achieved.

(3) "*And they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world; he was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him.*" This description of the dragon gives the key to the nature of the contest, and seems clearly to prove the correctness of the view just given as to the real field being within the intellectual, moral and spiritual nature of mankind. He deceives the whole world, and so has a place as prince or ruler in the heaven of that world so long as his spiritual deception continues. He is the old serpent, the devil, who tempted and seduced our first parents, and who had been keeping their posterity under the power of like temptation and seduction, even by misrepresentation of the truth and character of God. How, then, can Michael or any angel of light cast him down from his place in heaven here spoken of? Not by any direct personal conflict, not by the exercise of mere superior power, but by delivering men from the spiritual delusion which he everywhere maintains, or by enlightening the minds of men as to the glorious character and most gracious purposes of their Father

and God. As this great work of Divine illumination and human salvation advanced, Satan lost field after field of battle, till at last, his deception ended and his power prostrated, he fell from his lofty place, "he was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him,"—"neither was their place found any more in heaven." The words which follow will cast much light on what we have thus endeavoured to interpret.

(4) "*And I heard a great voice in heaven, saying, Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accuseth them before our God day and night.*" All heaven was interested in the mighty contest. Triumph has crowned the arms of the righteous and true. This great voice has been supposed to be that of the four and twenty elders, the representatives of the redeemed. It may be so. Rather would we suppose it to be that of all the redeemed in heaven. The redeemed on earth, those who enjoy the fruits of victory, are called "our brethren." As the spiritual war was carried on from age to age, and as the long succession of warriors passed from earth to heaven, very many through the gate of a violent and martyr death, these very warriors, conquering through life, and conquering when, by such death, they seemed for ever conquered, may be regarded as lifting this great voice, "saying, Now is come the salvation," for which we contended, and to promote which we died, "and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ." That, which Christian apostles and prophets and teachers and confessors and martyrs, and all the faithful followers of the True and Faithful Witness, sought for ages to bring to pass, has now come. They have vanquished Satan and the world and the flesh, and now the kingdom of our God has risen to power and glory among men, and the authority of His Christ is acknowledged throughout the whole Roman world. Paganism has really fallen. Persecution has ceased. The Church is triumphant and free. The gods of the heathen have perished. Jehovah alone is truly exalted. Christ is now honoured and obeyed as the only Divine Saviour and King. "The accuser" of Christians "is cast down. . . ." Again, the heaven here spoken of may be that of the Church on earth, whose saintly and true members are elsewhere called "dwellers in heaven," and "whose citizenship" is said by Paul "to be in heaven." In this case we might regard this great voice as that of the triumphant Christians who witnessed the triumph of the gospel over the Roman world, and, as many would suggest, the elevation of "a son of the Church" to the very throne of the

Cæsars. Not a little might be said in favour of some such view as this. However, the words "our brethren" seem more naturally to be spoken of brethren who knew by experience the nature and the hardships of the great war, and now rejoiced in heaven with those who rejoiced on earth over its glorious and triumphant issue. This view suggests the delightful thought of the close and continuous interest of "the saints in glory" in the saints yet under grace in this world.

"For the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accuseth them before our God night and day." According to Scripture, the constant aim of Satan is to tempt and seduce; but here and elsewhere he seems also represented as accusing before God those whom he has successfully tempted and seduced. Hence apparently a part at least of the meaning of Christ in His memorable words, "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself." This judgment seems twofold,—against the world, or unto the condemnation of all who sin; for the world, or unto the justification of all who believe. Doubly is the prince of this world cast out,—cast out as an accuser, or as claiming all sinners as his own or as worthy of condemnation like himself,—and cast out as a deceptive and enslaving power; and in both ways cast out by Christ, *first*, as a propitiation for sin, and *secondly*, as attracting to Himself the hearts of all who thus benefit from His death, and to whom is thus revealed His self-sacrificing love.

The death of Christ introduced a new saving power into our world to be wielded by the Holy Spirit and by the preaching of the gospel, casting down Satan and raising the fallen children of men. This new power is alluded to as such; and hence the form of the words, *now* is the judgment, and *now* is the power; not as if all were effected at once, but as implying that Christ's great work was, in all its saving power, about to begin. In being the accuser, Satan is here represented as denying the reality of the Divine pardon, and as thus keeping believers at a distance from God and under all the terrors of unforgiven sin. As such an accuser, he is vividly and impressively represented in the Book of Zechariah, chap. iii. 1-5: "And he showed me Joshua the high priest," representing the people, "standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to be his adversary,"—doubtless his accuser, as what follows clearly indicates. "And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; . . . is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments," in token

of acknowledged sin, his own and that of the people. "And He answered . . . saying, Take the filthy garments from off him. And unto him He said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with rich apparel." Christ does for all who confess their sins what Jehovah thus did for Joshua. Perfect pardon is given and enjoyed. "The filthy garments" are taken away; and, in token of full and free justification, Christ clothes "with rich apparel"; whilst the accuser is rebuked and cast out. This is the grand distinguishing feature of the true religion of heaven, or of God and of Jesus Christ: it bestows, at the very outset, on all who sincerely ask, a full and free and certain pardon of all sin, without exception and of whatever degree. All other religions keep men in the dark as to Divine forgiveness, or as to their real state before God. They can and do accuse of sin; but they cannot and do not assure of forgiveness. This one feature of the religion of Christ, when clearly and joyfully seen by the experienced eye of faith, reveals its Divinity, and, by very contrast, shows the mark of error on the face of every other. It has been supposed that the accuser is here to be viewed as falsely accusing Christians before magistrates, who are "ordained of God," and representative of God. However, the words used and the context prove that the more profound and spiritual reference is the correct.

(5) "*And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life even unto death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and ye that dwell in them.*" This victory is traced to three sources: "*the blood of the Lamb,*" "*the word of their testimony,*" and their own fidelity to Jesus Christ—"they loved not their life even unto death." First, "because of or on account of the blood of the Lamb." They sought forgiveness for all the sins of which they were accused and for which they condemned themselves; and they received it from God in virtue of or on the ground of the precious blood which had been shed by the Lamb as a propitiation for all sin. Secondly, "because of or on account of the word of their testimony." Here we should naturally expect to find, "by or by means of the word of their testimony," as in reality the world is subdued by the gospel of Jesus Christ. However, they are here viewed as simply spreading abroad the glorious gospel or declaring the truth of Christ; while God or the Spirit of God works along with them as well as by them in using "the word of their testimony" in the world's conversion. God honours them by making them victorious because of their faithful and self-sacrificing maintenance and declaration of "the word of

their testimony." *Thirdly*, because they were thus true and faithful, "they loved not their life even unto death." They were prepared to be heroes in the glorious war. They formed a part of "the noble army of martyrs." They loved their God and their Saviour, and the cause and kingdom of heaven, and the salvation of men, more than all they possessed, more than themselves.—Such were the sources of their strength, and of their success. So, too, they have been ever since, to all who triumph over sin within and sin without, who succeed in extending the dominions of Christ among men, and, with Christ, in "destroying the works of the devil."

Well may it be added, "*Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and ye that dwell in them*"! Here, the heavens seem to be those heavens or heavenly places in which all Christians are said to dwell: embracing the whole sphere of true divine and spiritual life, falsely occupied by Satan, who is now cast out and cast down and his angels with him. All the triumphant saints on earth are thus called upon by all the saints in heaven to rejoice, because of the great and wonderful conquest thus obtained over Satan in the conversion of men.

(6) "*Woe for the earth and the sea: because the devil is gone down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time.*" The exact force or reference of these words may not easily or fully appear. One thing they certainly seem to do—namely, to point to the same time and to the same thing as do the first and second woe-trumpets, or rather to the cry of woe calling attention to them. In this way they will, we think, be found to cast not a little light on the visions of these trumpets, which we regarded as disclosing the real origin of the antichristian system as associated with the beast from the abyss. There the woes are said to be "for them that dwell on the earth." Here the woe is said to be "for the earth and for the sea," or for the world usually so described. The same persons seem thus to be intended. We pointed out that the vision of the first woe-trumpet, that of the opening of the pit of the abyss and of the rise of a most terrible agency out of it, set forth the origin of the beast out of the pit referred to in the eleventh and seventeenth chapters. Now, we are told that the dragon, cast down to the earth, "waxed wroth with the woman, and went away to make war with the rest of her seed, which keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus Christ,"—to do, in fact, the very thing which was done by the beast from the abyss, and therefore by that very agency from the abyss which is to be identified with the beast. The inference seems plain, and yet striking, that he went

away to devise and to employ some special and suitable agency, by means of which he might effect this express purpose of making war with the saints. In order to do so he raises the agency to be identified with the beast out of the abyss.

But what is that beast from the abyss? We are clearly informed. He is the beast whose head was wounded unto death and afterwards healed or restored to life again. In the thirteenth chapter the beast is said to rise out of the sea; and so he did before he received the deadly blow; but when viewed as restored to life he is said to come from the abyss. The beast from the sea represents an empire in its first form or original character. But to imply that it had been slain and raised to new life, its head appears with the mark of the deadly wound, and yet as restored to wonted health and strength. The origin of the first life is thus indicated, as also the renewal to a second life, but not the origin of that second life. That origin is disclosed in chap. xvii. 8: "The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and is about to come up out of the abyss, and to go into perdition." Then it is added, "And they that dwell on the earth,"—the very persons referred to in connection with the woe of the first woe-trumpet and the woe under consideration,—"*shall wonder . . . when they behold the beast, how that he was, and is not, and shall come; and the beast that was, and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is of the seven; and he goeth into perdition.*" Now, what does all this imply, but that the beast from the sea received a deadly wound or was out-and-out slain, and afterwards that same beast, at least in real spirit and character, was raised from the dead, not now from the sea merely, or at all, but out of the abyss, with new life from Satan, the king of the abyss, and not from God? But when and by whom was this deadly wound inflicted? We are not left to conjecture. That head wounded to death was one of the seven heads of the dragon, and the deadly blow was dealt by the hand of Michael, the prince and representative of the true Israel, "the rest of the seed of the woman which keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus." If this was not the blow which at once wounded to death this head of the serpent, and so was the means of casting him out of heaven, we have not another cause of this deadly wound so much as hinted at in this entire Book.

Satan, then, when he thus fell, or when the head existing while the war in heaven was carried on received the deadly blow, sought in some new way to re-open the mighty war, and determined to put forth all his power and skill to restore that fallen head to life, or to

raise up a new empire which would occupy the place and breathe the spirit, and, to all intents, act the very part of the old. Hence the agency from the abyss. Hence the same agency developed into the beast from the abyss. Hence, too, the most significant description of this beast—namely, “The beast that was, and is not, and is about to come out of the abyss,” or, “The beast that was, and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is of the seven”: he is one of the seven, as taking the place of the one wounded to death; and he is an eighth, because, though in one sense a revival of the slain, he is yet, in another sense, another and an independent head. In this way, then, we are to identify the woe here announced with the woe of the first woe-trumpet, and to regard both as pointing to one and the same thing, nay, as proving the identity of the locust agency and the beast from the abyss. To raise that agency, or to give life to that beast, Satan is here said, after his fall from heaven, to go away to “make war with the rest of the woman’s seed,” or the saints of God and the servants of Jesus Christ. Too truly is it here said, “woe for the earth and for the sea!” as it was elsewhere, “woe for them that dwell on the earth!”—woe for all who are of the earth earthly, and who have not “the seal of the living God in their foreheads”!

(7) We seem now prepared to present the above in a clear and simple form. In so doing we may make the following successive observations:—

First. This most wonderful chapter gives us a symbolic history of the great warfare of the ages between good and evil,—between the Church and the world, between God or Christ and Satan the deceiver of mankind. Up to the time of Christ, here specially referred to, this is rather implied than expressly represented.

Secondly. The birth of Christ is here symbolised, not as a literal child, but as the true and fit Messiah or Saviour of the world. It may be called the second birth of Him who was dead and is alive for evermore,—His resurrection-birth, and therefore following that great life of warfare with Satan, the world and sin, in which He Himself has said that He so overcame as to sit down on His Father’s throne. Hence—

Thirdly. His being caught up to that throne corresponds to His appearing in heaven as a Lamb which had been slain, and, in virtue of His Self-sacrifice, being glorified and enthroned. As already said, in this case He is enthroned in virtue of the great victory achieved on earth. In other words, we are to trace His crown to His cross on the one hand, and to His sinless and perfect and triumphant life

on the other. The latter is apt to be overlooked by the peculiarity of the symbolism; the idea of a child suggesting natural birth, and not previous warfare and victory. When, however, we keep by the thought of a resurrection-birth, implying previous life and death, all is clear and simple. Historically all this is fully implied in what Jesus said before His ascension, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and on earth," and, He might have added, therefore I ascend to take My place at My Father's right hand.

Fourthly. We can now be at no loss as to the mother of this long promised and now provided Son—the woman of heavenly origin, heavenly character, heavenly glory, upheld by heavenly power—the true Church of all ages, here the mother and elsewhere the bride and wife of the Lamb. The names simply express the different relations of Christ to His people. Here we specially refer to the bride and wife, as this symbol is to be contrasted with another and very different symbol of professedly the same object—namely, the pure and virgin Church of Jesus Christ. Here we have the beautiful and glorious emblem of the true Church. Afterwards we have the faithful, but fearful, picture of the professedly true, but really false and fallen Church, the symbol of the woman sitting on the wild beast. The terrible contrast between the two must be kept in view, if we would see the fitness of very much of the symbolic representations of the following chapters.

Fifthly. We can also now see how we are here told of a mighty war following the coronation of the "male Child" or strong Son of God. His commission explains all. We have referred to His claim, "All power is given to Me," and now we refer to the commission fitly added, "Go and make disciples of all nations." The little feeble, but invincible army of the great Captain was to invade the territory of the prince of this world. Hence, when the first seal was opened by this Captain, the symbol of the Conqueror on the white horse, the symbol of the grand work of converting the world to God, or of banishing the great deceiver from his dark dominions, followed. The war thus implied is the same great war here alluded to, only under a totally different symbolic form. It is said to be in heaven, because Satan has usurped the place of God or taken his proud place there. In this world's sphere of religion, Satan, viewed as the author and upholder of all false views of God, or of all false religion, has by far the larger space.

In keeping with the prophetic symbolism of Daniel, Michael represents God, Christ, the true religion. He is represented as assailing the dragon, just as the apostolic army preached the

gospel to the world, or as the Rider on the white horse went forth to fight and to conquer. Though the symbols suggest a war of good and evil angels, the real war symbolised is that between the Apostolic Church and the world. Hence what follows as to Christians gaining the victory in virtue of the death and testimony of Christ, and yet at the expense of life or of martyr-death. The war in heaven is symbolic of the war on earth: when we turn to the latter we see the interpretation of the former. So we found in the case of the four angels bound at the Euphrates. They represented the great army of mystic Babylon. When the angels were unbound, that army was let loose. The former symbolised the latter; and when we grasp the thing symbolised, we may cease to think more of the symbol. We have identified, then, this war with that of the Victor on the white horse, and both with that of the Apostolic Church in the subjugation of the world to Christ and to God. One thing more we can now do. We can see the real meaning of the vision of the fifth seal, the vision of the martyrs or martyr-Church, or Church suffering even in many cases up to death, in her struggles with the opposing world. In that vision the "souls of them that had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held," the very persons here spoken of, were seen "underneath the altar," in perfect keeping with what we are here told as one cause of victory, namely, "that they loved not their life even unto death." Thus do we find the most important visions of this Book perfectly harmonious and mutually explanatory.

Sixthly. It is of great importance to mark the time of the appearance of this great dragon, and the real import of his complex form. He is the symbol of the world viewed as fallen, without God, and under the deception of Satan. We have regarded the seven heads as representative of seven kingdoms of that world, rising in succession, and all more or less hostile to the people of God. These heads seem to represent Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and a seventh which has not yet come to the front, but will do so in proper time and then continue only for a little season. At the mystic birth, and during the mystic war, the fourth beast of Daniel and the sixth head of this dragon was in supreme political power. During this period, according to Daniel, the Divine kingdom was to be set up. This mystic birth and this mystic war set forth the rise and progress of that kingdom. That fourth beast of Daniel and sixth head of John was Rome, and Rome alone. The symbols and even words of Daniel can admit of no other possible interpretation. Pagan Rome, then, must be fully

kept in view. The war terminated in the conversion of great multitudes throughout the Roman empire, and the triumph of the religion of Christ over that of that empire as represented by the the living and ruling head of the dragon.

The rise of Christianity and the fall of Paganism were the issue of this great war. As the head represents a community or empire both politically and religiously, it is perfectly right thus to speak of the fall of Paganism. Yet, we go very far aside from what is most decidedly intended, if we treat the war as that between two religions only, and not as a great spiritual work as well as warfare for the real conversion of the world to God, and for the real establishment of the Church or kingdom of Christ among mankind. Keeping this ever in sight, we must also keep in view the false or pagan religion or religions of Rome. Unless we do, we cannot fully grasp the idea of the fall of the dragon or his being cast out of heaven. As Christian influence rose, pagan power fell. When the former thoroughly triumphed, the latter was completely overthrown, and its representative, the dragon, was cast down from the heaven or sphere of authority and power. Through other means he might influence and rule mankind; but the religion through which he had done so, had, in being overthrown, failed him for ever. He was cast down to the earth. His Roman-Pagan head had received a deadly wound, had fallen under the sword of Michael, the warrior or prince of the Christian people.

The nature of this wound and of the death which followed should be clearly understood. Here mistake is very common and very great. The overthrow of the empire as such is by no means meant. The other heads, which preceded in power, had all been overthrown, and yet had never received such a deadly blow as that here meant. Only one of the seven heads was wounded unto death,—only one of them was restored to life again. That one and only head was the head of the empire then existing and then ruling over the whole known world,—even the Roman, and the Roman alone. It was the religion of Rome which fell under the blow of the religion of Jesus Christ, yet, as we have said, not as a mere external result, but as the result of the real conversion of men to Christ and to God, the real deliverance of men from the bondage of Satan and of sin. One false religion might fall under the power of another false religion; and yet false religion would remain as much alive as before. Only through the agency of true religion can false religion of any kind or of every kind receive a deadly blow; and only by the restoration of false religion of one form or another—it need not be of the

same form—can the deadly wound be healed. In this way, when we afterwards read of the pagan head, killed by Christian influence and power, being revived or restored, then we are to infer that Christianity has lost its power, and a new or renewed Paganism has taken its place. This will appear when we consider what the dragon is said to do in order to recover his position and power.

Seventhly. The great voice of triumph thus relates to the wonderful success of the gospel throughout the empire of Pagan Rome:—"Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ." This shout of victory may point to the time when, by the elevation of Constantine to the imperial throne, Christianity had ceased to be persecuted, and might be said to possess supreme authority and power over the whole known world. This was, indeed, a most marvellous achievement. Well may we, even to this day, look back upon that period of history, and exclaim, "What hath God wrought!" We might well do this, even though we could not admire the Christian emperor's type of character, and might not be at all assured of his real or full conversion to Christ. The fact that Christianity had risen to such influence and power in the empire as to admit of any one, whether sincerely or not, having the Christian name, ascending the throne of the Cæsars, cannot but be regarded as most marvellous. We do not say that the part afterwards taken by the emperor, in the Councils and within the pale of the Church, was at all profitable to the Church, or led to any real good to many who so magnified the just authority of God as to refuse to acknowledge the authority of man. We simply say here that, viewed as a result of ages of toil and suffering, the elevation of one professing to be a Christian to the throne of pagan, persecuting Rome, was certainly marvellous beyond conception. After the sounding of the seventh trumpet, we find a like shout of triumph,—“great voices in heaven . . . said, The kingdom of the world is become (the kingdom) of our Lord and of His Christ.” This shout of victory, however, belongs to a different and distant period. Ah! the marvellous victory over Pagan Rome had been turned into a most mysterious and a most marvellous defeat, through the perversion and corruption of the Christian Church. After converting the world, the Church was perverted by the world. After wounding Roman Paganism to the death, Satan, under a new form, introduced Paganism into the Church, and, through the long-continued working of “the mystery of iniquity,” reared for himself a new pagan empire, called by the

sacred name of the Christian Church, and yet being none other than the like pagan and persecuting empire of Papal Rome. This renewed Pagan Rome is ascribed in this Book to the great dragon, that had been cast down, and that reared this new empire in his fierce and wrathful enmity to "the woman," and to "the rest of her seed which keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus." We are told that he went to compass this very end. As a result, the wild beast of the thirteenth and seventeenth chapters, with the deadly wound healed, rises out of the abyss, as it previously had risen out of the sea. The resurrection of Pagan Rome in the form of Papal Rome is thus set forth as the super-human work of the dragon, the old serpent, the enemy of both God and man. Hence—

Eighthly. The woe of this chapter is to be identified with the first woe of the ninth. There we found the rise of a terrible agency from the abyss; here we find the same agency, but fully developed and called by the name of the beast from the abyss. The agency of the first woe-trumpet was due to the perversion of the Christian ministry, and consequent paganisation of the Christian Church. Organised in the highest degree, and possessed of a head of supreme authority, that agency became and now appears in the beast from the abyss. We repeat, then, that we have now reached, in the symbolism of this chapter, the same point as that of the first woe-trumpet. What followed the sounding of the third woe-trumpet of the eleventh chapter was therefore really long after, and was, in fact, the shout of victory because of the fall of the agency or beast from the abyss, or of the new Pagan empire of Papal Rome.

8. *Vers. 13-17.* "And when the dragon saw that he was cast down to the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man (child). And there was given to the woman the two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness unto her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth after the woman water as a river, that he might cause her to be carried away by the stream. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the river which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon waxed wroth with the woman, and went away to make war with the rest of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus."

(1) *And when the dragon saw that he was cast down to the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man (child)."* When he was cast out of the spiritual or religious sphere, through

the real conversion of many to God and to Christ, and even through the intellectual conviction of many more who accepted the religion of Christ and so rejected the pagan religion of Rome, he had still the personal and political sphere in which to act. He could still do much to oppose the true Christian Church, the woman referred to throughout this chapter. When the real time was at which he was cast down we may not be able to fix. We need hardly repeat that a single symbolic act or event, which in the symbol may seem to take place at some definite or some very short period, may, in the reality, have taken a somewhat long and thoroughly indefinite time to be done or to come to pass. We have here the triumph of Christianity within the Roman empire, and, along with it, the cessation of persecution referred to. We cannot say that either finally took place through the elevation of Constantine to the throne. Julian afterwards at least supported the falling, if not fallen, religion. At any rate, there remained many pagans on whose minds evil influence could be brought to bear. Even nominal Christians could be used to vex and persecute the true. "The mystery of iniquity," at work in apostolic times, was long and powerfully at work within the Church, and, after the fall of Paganism, was certainly at work in the persecution of the true and faithful who would not accept the growing errors or yield to the growing corruptions of the proudly so-called Catholic Church. In various ways the persecution here referred to may have been carried on. We are not to suppose any entirely direct work of the dragon or old serpent; but one of those opposed to the religion and people of Christ viewed as stirred up and led on by him.

(2) "*And there was given to the woman the two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness unto her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.*" All this points to the great crisis in the history of the Christian Church, extending over a considerable time both before and after the reign of Constantine, that of what we may call the embryonic period of the antichristian Church, during which the more pure Church began her flight,—a flight, however, which, in keeping with the principle above alluded to, might occupy a vastly longer time than the symbol may suggest, very greatly longer than did that, here referred to, of Israel to the literal desert and from the face of the dragon of Egypt. Here many seem to have confounded the symbol with the thing symbolised; and have sought out some actual place or places to which, at the time intended, the woman literally fled. The wilderness of the true Church has often been

the cultivated and peopled country of the false. Yes; the more truly Christian Churches, or peoples connected with them, have often spent their days in a wilderness, by being cut off from the sympathy and the communion, and even common respect, of some dominant Church of less Christian or more worldly spirit and character. So, at least to no small extent, it may be intended here. The dominant Church becoming more and more corrupt and overbearing, the purer Church would virtually retire, as if locally to desert places, and that in reality from the face of the serpent working within the new paradise of the Christian Church, and making it a garden of all sorts of strange, but not heavenly, plants and trees of delicious, but deleterious, fruits.

We do not say that the true Church might not be forced to withdraw from all visible connection with the perverted, and thus proud and persecuting, Church. This much may thus be included in what is here meant, but not by any means necessarily, as concealment might take the place of local removal; and, when persecution was not violent, the Church of the Church, the Israel of Israel, might be kept and be fed with the finest of the wheat, with the hidden manna of the real wilderness symbolised, whilst the proud and perverted Church all around her was becoming a spiritually barren and dreary land, and very far from resembling or being "the garden of the Lord."

"*There was given to her the two wings of the great eagle.*" The use of the articles here seems very emphatic. The meaning seems more than that she was borne as on the wings of eagles. The allusion is evidently to Exod. xix. 4, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself." Beautiful thought!—not carried you to the desert, but "brought you to Myself." Yes, the wilderness of the world or of the perverted Church may be the true Eden, the very Paradise of God. As in ancient days, the true Church amidst the false is carried on eagles' wings by Jehovah, or by Jesus Christ, and "brought to Himself," brought nearer to Him than in less adverse circumstances she was likely to be. Her place would thus be a place of safety and a place prepared for her, where she would be richly fed and fitly nourished during all the days of her appointed solitary life,—even "*for a time, times, and half a time,*" three years and a half, equal to the 1260 days of verse 6.

We need not say how opinions have differed as to this peculiar period. We have so far treated of this already; and proposed to bring the principle of the year-day theory to the test of fact, by applying it to the various cases as they occur. We have already

brought it to this test in the case of the two symbolic witnesses; and, we think, found it by no means to fail. On the principle that these witnesses must have begun to mourn, and so to prophesy in sackcloth, as soon as the general Church gave clear evidence of growing perversion and corruption, we saw no difficulty in the way of our justly regarding the time of mourning as extending 1260 years back from some point previous to the outbreak of the great Reformation, when they were symbolically slain or literally silenced and subdued. We do not suppose that, in the case of the woman or true Church, the symbolic period, though of the same length, should at all be conceived as having the same beginning or the same ending. The Church, though entering or moving towards her wilderness state for no short time before fully taking up her abode in "the place prepared for her," should be viewed as still a part of the nominal Church long after, not improbably ages after, the witnesses began to prophesy in sackcloth. In this way the 1260 years may have ended no short time after what we have called the outburst of the great Reformation. This difference of time between the beginning of the mourning of the witnesses and that of the full flight of the woman or full withdrawal of the true Church, which, as we have said, may have extended to even ages, has been unobserved, and yet is of no small importance in relation to a fair and proper calculation of the times intended, or to a satisfactory application of the year-day principle to the case in hand.

Here we think we shall most satisfactorily treat this subject by carefully considering the manner in which Alford has very acutely, and yet, we think, by no means correctly, dealt with the subject. He seems altogether wrong as to the persecution itself. He says, "I own that, considering the analogies and the language used, I am much more disposed to interpret the persecution of the woman by the dragon of the various persecutions by the Jews which followed the Ascension, and her flight into the wilderness of the gradual withdrawal of the Church and her agency from Jerusalem and Judæa, finally consummated by the flight to the mountains on the approaching siege, commanded by our Lord Himself." It is certainly astonishing that so acute a critic should have thus overlooked the whole period of the mighty war which is in this very chapter so impressively set forth as following the rapture of the Child or the very Ascension to which Alford refers. Satan was in one sense cast down by the sacrificial death of Christ, but not in the sense meant by the words of this chapter, in which he is expressly said to have been cast down as the issue of this great

spiritual warfare. Alford, accordingly, most certainly errs, and errs very greatly, as to the beginning of the period spoken of, whether measured on the year-day principle or not. Again, he adds, "As to the time indicated by 1260 days, or three and a half years, the interpretations given have not been convincing, nor even specious. We may observe thus much in this place: that if we regard this prophecy as including long historic periods, we are driven to one of two resources with regard to these numbers: either we must adopt the *year-day* theory, . . . or we must believe the numbers to have merely a symbolic and mystical, not a chronological force. If we regard the periods mentioned as to be literally accepted, then the prophecy cannot refer to long historic periods, but must be limited to a succession of incidents concentrated in one place and lustrum, either in the far past or in the far future. Of all prophecies about which these questions can be raised, the present is the one which least satisfactorily admits of such literal interpretation and its consequences." This is certainly correct. The literal interpretation of these years or months or days is not only untenable, but, we may justly say, ridiculous and absurd. Alford is right as to either the *year-day* theory, or that of some more general mystical meaning, being alone tenable.

Again, he continues: "Rejecting the literal, how do we stand with regard to the other alternative in its two forms? Granting for the moment the year-day principle, will it help us here? If we take the flight into the wilderness as happening at any time between the Ascension, A.D. 30, and the destruction of Jerusalem, A.D. 70, 1260 years will bring us to some time between A.D. 1290 and 1330: a period during which no event can be pointed out as putting an end to the wilderness-state of the Church." All assuredly right, except the supposed date of the beginning, as we have already shown. "If, again, we enlarge our limit for the former event, and bring it down as late as Elliott does, *i.e.* to the period between the fourth and seventh centuries, we fall into all the difficulties which beset his most unsatisfactory explanation of the Man-child, and His being caught up to God's throne, and besides, into this one: that if the occultation of true religion (= the condition of the invisible Church) was the beginning of the wilderness-state, then either the open establishment of the Protestant Churches was the end of the wilderness-state of concealment, or those Churches are no true Churches: either of which alternatives would hardly be allowed by that author."

This seems almost demonstrative of error on the part of Elliott, and against the successful application of the year-day system.

With the above we so far fully agree. We agree as to the "most unsatisfactory character of Elliott's explanation of the Man-child, and His being caught up to God's throne"—namely, that the vision relates to Constantine the Great, and not to Christ Himself. We agree, also, that if we take the first Churches of the Reformation to be referred to, as Alford supposes Elliott to hold, the inference of Alford seems most logically correct. If we add 1260 years to from 400 to 700, as referred to above, we come to A.D. 1660 at the very earliest, at least a hundred years after the rise of the Reformation and formation of the first Reformed Churches. This would thus seem clearly to imply that the year-day theory was wrong, or that these Churches, as Alford says, "are no true Churches." Now, we are not disposed to regard the flight, seclusion or occultation, as earlier than A.D. 400, or even as so early; and yet we cannot, from this, draw any inference hostile to the year-day theory. We have no doubt as to the early Reformation being to all intents the revival of the witnessing Church or people of Christ; but, however excellent the Reformers and glorious the Reformation, we are by no means prepared to regard the early Churches of the Reformation as at all a genuine revival or resurrection of the Churches represented by the seven golden candlesticks, with the one Divine High Priest walking among them. These Churches we need not call, as Alford expresses it, "no true Churches." They may have been sufficiently reformed, and so thoroughly devoted to the service of that Royal and Priestly Head, as to merit the name of Churches of Jesus Christ; and yet they may have retained so much of the evils of the Church from which they came out as by no means to imply that they were the correct or really restored representatives of the seven golden candlesticks. Coming forth from Babylon with much purely gospel light, they yet failed to set forth the New Testament constitution of a Christian Church.

First. However much the Reformers affirmed that Christ was the sole Head of His own kingdom, and that the Sacred Scriptures were the sole fountain of law to the Christian Church, the practical result of their whole procedure was to establish such a relationship between State and Church as involved the spiritual degradation of the latter, and issued in the most fearful evils to both. By a few this was foreseen and lamented. D'Aubigné (vol. iv., pp. 386-7) remarks, "Some persons had at that time a glimpse of what might have saved Switzerland and the Reformation,—the *Autonomy* (self-government) of the Church, and its independence of political interests. Had they been wise enough to decline the secular power

to secure the triumph of the gospel, it is probable that harmony might have been gradually established in the Helvetic cantons, and that the gospel would have conquered by its Divine strength. . . . In separating from the Papacy, Ecolampadius desired not to set up the magistracy in its stead. 'The magistrate,' he wrote to Zwingli, 'would be more intolerable than Antichrist himself (*i.e.* the Pope)' . . . 'The hand of the magistrate strikes with the sword, but the hand of Christ heals. Christ has not said, If thy brother will not hear thee, tell it to the magistrate, but—*tell it to the Church*. The functions of the State are distinct from those of the Church. The State is free to do many things which the purity of the gospel condemns.'" All this most sadly applies to all the early Churches of the Reformation. The evil results have been incalculable.

Secondly. These Churches, in thus leaning upon an arm of flesh, were led to use that arm to put down and persecute others, even such as, taking the Scriptures for their guide, differed from them on points of both principle and practice. All honour to Jeremy Taylor and John Locke for their endeavours in defence of "Liberty, true and just and impartial Liberty!" Only the Independents in England, and the Baptists and Quakers in America, refrained from persecution when possessed of political power. We must come down to one hundred and fifty years after the opening of the Reformation before we can behold the reappearance of the golden candlesticks of John; and we must wait for many a year after before these candlesticks can be said to have been at all adequately restored. Yes; so long as Churches, instead of being persecuted for righteousness' sake, or for the name of Jesus, are guilty of persecuting smaller and feeblér Churches, perhaps purer and far more enlightened than themselves, we cannot, with any propriety, call them primitive or apostolic. Apart altogether from the great question of the union of State and Church, we must come down very far beyond the time required by Alford's argument now under consideration, before we can find the various State Churches so free from the abuse of political power as to merit no such reproach. We must at least come far down beyond the period required by that argument, namely, $400 + 1260 = \text{A.D. 1660}$.

Thirdly. We must add, in close connection with this, that these early Churches, to no small extent at least, identified the nation with the Church or the Church with the nation. It was so in England: the king became head of the Church because head of the nation. So on the continent of Europe. It was so in Geneva, —only the Council, in a republic, occupied the place of a king. In

his "History of Protestantism," vol. ii. p. 305, Dr. Wylie writes: "If the action of the Consistory effected the reformation of the offender, he was straightway restored to his place in the Church; if he remained incorrigible, the case came under the cognisance of the civil jurisdiction. The Council summoned him to its bar, and inflicted punishment—it might be imprisonment, or it might be banishment. The spiritual court, looking at the act as an offence against the ecclesiastical ordinances, had visited it with an ecclesiastical censure; the Council, looking at it as a breach of the civil laws, awarded against it a temporal punishment. We ask why this double character of the same act? Because in Geneva the nation was the Church, and the ecclesiastical ordinances were also the laws of the State. They had not only been enacted by the Senate; they had been twice solemnly and unanimously voted by the people." Such a Church, assuredly, was essentially unlike that of the apostolic or primitive golden candlestick. "The nations, Gentiles or heathen," to whom it was given to "tread the Holy City under foot forty and two months," consist simply of people as they come into this world, or the once-born; whilst the true Israel who alone rightly dwell there consist of the twice-born, or of those who are renewed by the Holy Spirit. At this early date, then, this Genevan Church, and too many others, too much resembled that of the forty-two months, whose city was trodden under foot of the unsealed, to be a fit revival of one of the seven golden candlesticks. To find such we must come down the stream of time sufficiently far, we repeat, to meet the objection of Alford, or to meet all such objection to the interpretation which proceeds on the year-day theory, which may thus be said to stand the test of this further application.

(3) "*And the serpent cast out of his mouth after the woman water as a river, that he might cause her to be carried away by the stream. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the river which the dragon cast out of his mouth.*"

This is one of those subordinate portions of the prophecy which it is not easy to explain at once definitely and satisfactorily, but which happily cannot be said greatly to affect the general interpretation. If we cannot be certain as to the precise reference, we may at least say that, of the explanations given, we know of none more likely to be the correct one than that which supposes an allusion to the many heresies, especially the Arian, which more or less widely and strongly influenced the Church. A stream or flood of errors proceeding from the mouth of the great deceiver is at least a very natural

idea, and can be charged with no extravagance, as have been not a few interpretations of different portions of this Book.

(4) "*And the dragon waxed wroth with the woman, and went away to make war with the rest of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus.*" We have really dealt with these words already; and need say little more concerning them. They refer to a great crisis in the history of the Christian Church. They refer to a new and marvellous device to turn the tide of the great spiritual warfare, by making use of the nominal Church to fight the battle of the old serpent against the true Church. The dragon seeks to rise once more, if possible, to the heaven of spiritual or religious and worldly or political power, by perverting the Church, turning aside the Christian ministry from the simplicity and truth of the glorious gospel of the blessed God, and by leading multitudes away from real and sincere allegiance to the Divine Head of the Church to mistaken and profane devotion to one within the Church, no more than human, and yet daring to usurp the throne and abuse the prerogative of Him who is seated on His Father's throne, and who, inconceivably far from needing any representative or vicar, promised, before ascending to heaven, to be with His loyal and obedient people to the end of the world. We found that the woe of this chapter coincided with the cry of the flying angel or eagle, and pointed to the three woes of the ninth and following chapters. When the dragon went, as here said, to war with those who are really to be identified with the woman, as the children of Zion are ever to be identified with Zion herself, he went to do what is meant by the three, or rather the first two, woes just alluded to, or he went to raise that agency from the abyss which we have again and again identified with the beast from the abyss; the former being that deluded and perverted ministry of the Church, which became more and more fully organised and more and more completely ruled and animated by one proud and persecuting head, even the beast of the next and seventeenth chapters. Paganism has lost its power, and has, in its old and Roman form, perished for ever. The Roman head of the dragon has received its last and fatal blow, symbolically from the hand of the great angelic prince of the people of the true Israel of every age and land, and literally from the hand of Christ Himself, the true and great Captain of salvation, and through the true and faithful army of apostles and prophets and martyrs and countless followers, "who loved not their life unto death," now utterly unknown to fame, but all of "whose names are written in heaven and in the Lamb's Book of Life."

II.

CHAPTER XIII.

VISION OF THE BEAST AND FALSE PROPHET, OR THE
RISE AND REIGN OF ANTICHRIST.

1. *Vers. 1, 2.* "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns ten diadems, and upon his heads names of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as (the feet) of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority."

(1) "*And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast coming up out of the sea.*" Here we very much prefer the Authorised to the Revised Version. In the latter we have, "and he," the dragon, "stood upon the sand of the sea"; the clause being accordingly connected with the twelfth chapter. The two Greek words differ in only one letter; so that a clerical error might easily be made. It seems very far from likely that, as in the Revised Version, the dragon should be represented as standing where he might see the beast rising out of the sea, and yet John, who is not said to be where he could so see, and not the dragon, represented as seeing the beast so rising. Just as Daniel is said in vision to be by the river Ulai, and to see standing before the river a ram, etc.; so John, as in the Authorised Version, in vision is standing where he might see what he had to see. Besides, the dragon, instead of being so represented, is expressly said to go away to make war with the woman's seed; so that we may conclude, *first*, that he then went just to prepare for the rise of the restored head of this beast, and, *secondly*, that all to be then said of him was ended.

Here a new vision begins—that of John standing on the shore and beholding a wild beast coming up out of the sea. This at once leads us back to the like vision of Daniel, the real original of this, that which suited the time and position of Daniel, as this is altered and given so as to suit the times and position of John. Here this beast is said to rise out of the sea. In chap. xvii. it is said to rise out of the abyss. That the two are one and the same may be clearly seen, —we may say, may be conclusively proved. What is here said of the wounded and restored head will suffice to prove the identity. If that is overlooked, or not carefully considered, confusion of idea is sure to be created. This restored head shows that this beast,

though originally from the sea, has now arisen from another source. In the case of the good, a new or resurrection life would be said to have come from above or from God. In the case of the evil, a renewal or resurrection of evil would be traced to the abyss and to Satan. Here the original beast is at first suggested, and he is therefore said to come from the sea. In the seventeenth chapter, the restored beast, or second of like nature and spirit with the first, is chiefly presented; and he is therefore spoken of as from the abyss. The wound has been cured; a resurrection has taken place. Satan is declared to have been the cause. He went away to make war with the seed of the woman, and in this restored head we find the agency prepared for the purpose, as we are told (ver. 7), "And it was given unto him to make war with the saints." As we have before found, this agency is identical with that out of the abyss set forth in the vision of the first woe-trumpet. We thus see what he went to do, and what he actually did, to carry on his war with the true people of God.

(2) "*Having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns ten diadems, and upon his heads names of blasphemy.*" It would seem natural to put the heads before the horns, as in the Authorised Version, and as we find in the case of the dragon. However, there seems a symbolic reason for the order given in either case. In that of the dragon the heads were crowned; in that of the beast, the horns. In the reign of the dragon, the empires represented by the heads were in life and power; in that of the beast, the kingdoms represented by the horns were to come into power. In the former the heads were the more important; in the latter, the horns were to become so. The heads had become, or would soon become, crownless. The horns, though representing no kingdoms which had yet been, represented those destined and in due course to arise. Whilst the heads were crownless, they still had something mysterious and awful upon them, even "*names of blasphemy.*" These heads, with diadems, were so many kingdoms or empires. We have already regarded them as Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and one to follow Rome and then soon to pass away.

All represent one and the same object—the heathen world, the world without the true God, the God of revelation; and therefore to be distinguished, whatever the form of religion, from the Israel of God and of the true revealed religion. All these heads, kingdoms or empires, are to be viewed as, in some way, more or less hostile to the people of God. The world, with however many and varied,

even unlike heads, is but one body, of the same nature and of the same spirit. At one time the chief head may be Egypt, at another Assyria, or Greece, or Rome. In all cases it is the same wild beast of Daniel and of John, whether as dragon or as anything else. The form may be changed to suit the various ends of prophecy, but the reality, mankind without the true God, is always one and the same. Hence we have the one dragon with seven heads, though these heads were so far successive. The dragon-form is best fitted to set forth the world as inspired, ruled, deceived and directed by Satan, and to show how Satan acts through the medium of the world.

The form of the beast here depicted is fitted to show what the world in itself, or thus animated, really is in point of nature, spirit, character, and in opposition to the just reign of God and the true interests of man. The dragon and the beast are thus different forms of the same world, only viewed under different aspects. The heads are really the same. As said, in both cases they are so far successive. As the dragon is represented during the whole course of his relationship to the deceived and fallen world, from first to last, he is said to have all these heads, whether passed away altogether, as Assyria and Babylon, or yet to come, as then was the short-lived one which was to follow the sixth or Roman. So the wild beast has the same number of heads, though he is himself the world or world-power, as some would say, under the Roman head. On all the heads—thus symbolising the godless world under so many ruling powers or kingdoms, are here said to be “names of blasphemy.” They all misrepresented God. They all assumed the attributes and usurped the prerogatives of God. They virtually or actually demanded the worship or the absolute obedience due alone to God. They all thus acted as if on the very throne of God. They gave no heed to the consciences of men as demanding special obedience to God. The law of the empire was above any and every law of God. In fact, they were enthroned and God was disenthroned. God was uncrowned that they might be crowned. God was banished from His own dominions that the stolen inheritance might be theirs.

“*On his ten horns ten diadems,*” symbols of royal dominion, rather, as afterwards shown, of ten kingdoms, all connected with the kingdom or empire symbolised by the beast, not then existent, but destined to arise in the future, and, as we find in Daniel, to take or occupy the place of the Roman empire. Though yet thus non-existent, they are crowned on the principle already stated,

that these symbols represent the future as well as past history of the object symbolised. Some would regard both numbers, seven and ten, as purely symbolic, and therefore not indicative of any real or literal numbers. However, when we find these heads declared, as in Daniel, to represent actual kingdoms, this view of the matter must be entirely laid aside. Thus far we are compelled to interpret this Book historically, or rather to accept the historical interpretation which both Daniel and John undeniably give us. This definite and historical interpretation will rise up before our minds, as we consider the symbols and their occasional accompanying explanations, as they are successively set forth in this and the seventeenth chapters.

(3) "*And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as (the feet) of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion.*" If we were to regard this as a thoroughly new and independent symbol, we should simply inquire as to what these three features really expressed. But when we know that much is directly transferred from Daniel, it becomes us to turn to his prophecy, that, if possible, we may find some key to at least a part of the meaning of the whole. Now, in Dan. vii. 1-28, we find a most wonderful prophecy, whose range extends from the prophet's own times, and down through many ages, even to the full recovery of the whole world to the God of Israel and His promised Messiah, or that One who is described as "like unto a son of man," and in absolute contrast to these fearful beasts of the vision. Of these we are told of four—the first like a lion, the second like a bear, and the third like a leopard; whilst the fourth is simply said to be "terrible and dreadful and strong exceedingly," and to have "great iron teeth," as also "ten horns." Now, the one before us is clearly marked out as the same as this, by two distinctive features: *first*, that of having ten horns; and, *secondly*, that of being, as it were, made up of the first three which succeeded one another, and were then followed by the fourth, and, as we may say, absorbed into it,—having the leopard form of the third, the feet of the bear or second, and the mouth of the lion representing the first. We have here, then, a modified representation of the fourth or Roman beast of Daniel; the first being that of Babylon, the second that of the Medes and Persians, and the third that of Greece. But, there is this vast difference: the beast in Daniel has only one head; this beast described by John has seven heads. This, however, is easily accounted for. As we have said, this vision of John was adapted to its end as the earlier and more general one of Daniel was to *its* end. John's comprehended the

whole history of the world in relation to the Church, as did that of the dragon, from first to last; whilst Daniel's, having no expressed reference to the dragon at all, naturally and in fact went no farther back than his own times and the empire of Nebuchadnezzar. Hence the seven heads of the beast in question. He represents the same world as that under the figure of the dragon, and at the same period—that of the head which was wounded unto death, or the Roman head, which, during the war which followed the ascension of Christ, was, we have every reason to suppose, struck by the hand of Michael, and under whose deadly blow the dragon fell to the earth. The beast is thus viewed as the world under all the seven heads referred to, and especially under that which was first really slain and then raised from the dead.

(4) "*And the dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority.*" Here, as already suggested, may arise much confusion of ideas, if we do not keep in view what immediately follows as to the revival of the wounded head. This vision goes back as well as forward—back to the rise of the beast from the sea with no wounded head, and forward to the rise of the same beast from the dead or with its fatally smitten head fully cured and restored. Not till this restoration took place, or not till that which represented Pagan Rome was overthrown as pagan, and as such destroyed, did the dragon thus give his place and power to that which represented Pagan Rome in some way restored to new life and new power. This revived or restored head was really his own creation—came, as said in the seventeenth chapter, from the abyss, and therefore from his hand. All the while that the Church was contending with him as the spirit of the world, he, even from apostolic times, was working as a spirit of error within the Church, and, when cast down from heaven to earth and going to make war with the seed of the woman, he raised up, as we have found, the agency from the abyss of the first woe-trumpet, the very agency to be identified with this beast from the abyss, as the earlier form of a perverted or paganised ministry may be identified with its later and more completely developed and organised form, with its one acknowledged head despotically ruling over all whom that perverted agency has succeeded in perverting, even the many peoples or paganised Christians, the countless armies of the Euphrates or of the new Babylon, of the second woe-trumpet of the ninth chapter. To this his own creature the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority—in fact, led him to take the very place which used to be occupied by the pagan nations of the world, in all their power and glory, but all animated

and ruled by the dragon as the deceiver of the whole world, the world of erroneous religion or without the knowledge of the only living and true God. Before, Satan was leading the pagan world to fight against and to persecute the rising and victorious Church. Now, having succeeded in bringing back the Church to a new form of the old reality of Paganism, he can oppose and persecute the Church no more. The Church has become his restored kingdom, whose real throne is no longer Christ's, who has been forsaken, but his whom all now serve in reality, whilst professedly they serve Christ and continue to call themselves by the name of Christ. To the head of this new pagan world, now misnamed the only true Christian Church, the dragon gives his throne, all the aids of his power, and the very great authority which he has over the perverted and paganised peoples.

2. *Vers. 3-6.* "And (I saw) one of the heads as though it had been smitten unto death; and his death-stroke was healed: and the whole earth wondered after the beast; and they worshipped the dragon, because he gave his authority unto the beast; and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? and who is able to war with him? And there was given to him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and there was given to him authority to continue forty and two months, and he opened his mouth for blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, (even) them that dwell in heaven."

(1) "*And (I saw) one of his heads as though it had been smitten unto death; and his death-stroke was healed.*" We have just treated of this wonderful change and virtual resurrection from the dead, implying the like symbolical death of the Christian Church, and leading us to anticipate a like symbolical resurrection, after the days of this new paganism are ended, and when the time of the glorious revival and restoration of the wounded and fallen Church shall come, and when it shall, in the words of Paul, be with that Church as "life from the dead," words used of Israel reduced to a very similar state and to be raised out of it in a very similar way. Here we must carefully distinguish between the fall of any one of these pagan heads under the power of another of them, as Babylon under that of the Medes and Persians, or that of all under the power of Pagan Rome, and the fall of the head of the Roman or any other under the power of Christ. In this case the empire might remain in the same place and with the same people; but the pagan spirit, the pagan constitution, the pagan religion, the whole paganism of the empire will have passed away, and a new spirit, character, laws,

institutions will have taken their place, and the worldly and godless kingdom of Satan shall have become the holy and godly and new-created kingdom of Jesus Christ. If we simply put the world and the Church in opposition, we may see clearly, not only what may be meant, but what must be meant, by such a death and resurrection as we find here symbolised by the wounded and revived head of the beast. When the Church assailed the world by the preaching of the gospel, the world as the world was all alive and mighty. Every conversion from the world to the Church involved a death in the world, by being a death to the world. A large accession to the Church implied, if we may use a strong expression, a great slaughter of the world. When the Church came to live everywhere, the world became dead everywhere. If the Christian life had become perfect and universal, the death of the world would have become universal and complete.

The great spiritual war of last chapter was so successful, that, not absolutely but comparatively, the Church prevailed, and, not absolutely but comparatively, the world was overcome, and thus far wounded unto death or put to death. The Church now lives, and triumphs over the world. In no other way can we conceive the death of the world as the world brought about. Now, how could the world thus slain be raised from the dead or to new life and power? In one way, and in one alone,—even by the perversion of the Church, the return of the Church to the world. As Christian after Christian, or number of Christians after number, so returned, the Church would die and the world would rise from the dead; the Church would receive a deadly wound, and the wound of the world would be healed. In no other way can we justly, we may say can we possibly, interpret the words before us, or decipher the wonderful symbols of the fatally wounded and fully restored head of the mystic beast. And so, in the future resurrection of the Church and coming death of the beast, we can be at no real loss to know what is really meant. The Spirit of God will be breathed into the spiritually slain; the gospel in purity and power will be proclaimed; the dead Church will arise, and, like that in the vision of Ezekiel, “stand up an exceeding great army.” All this leads us to think of a period of the awful perversion of Christianity, and of the fearful substitution of some mighty heathenish empire for the pure spiritual, peaceful and unworldly kingdom of Jesus Christ. History must be consulted. If such an awful perversion has actually taken place, we shall need no very careful or minute inquiries or researches to discover. The most limited knowledge of the history of Europe, added to the

possession of a genuine Christian spirit and a sufficient knowledge of Christ and His kingdom as contained in the New Testament, will enable us to see clearly and to know infallibly what this Book of Revelation here means, and throughout its pages more or less clearly indicates, by the tremendous transformation and deformation, the restored worldliness and heathenism, of the once glorious, unworldly and triumphant apostolic Christian Church.

(2) "*And the whole earth wondered after the beast; and they worshipped the dragon, because he gave his authority unto the beast; and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? and who is able to war with him?*" All of the earth earthly so wondered, admired, revered, treated him as not only very great, but more than human. He appeared no beast to them. He seemed more of a god than of a man. At the very least, he was the supreme favourite, if not incarnation, of God. He assumed such lofty prerogatives, and seemed so mighty and so full of majesty. No earthly king could be equalled to Him. No great conqueror or monarch put forth such wonderful claims. Then he was the professed successor of Him who seemed so feeble, and whose kingdom had been so often treated with contempt. Now a mighty potentate, called by the most sacred names, supported by the greatest men of the world, and treated as the very mediator between God and man, strong in the strength of loyal and submissive kings, we cannot wonder at the wonder of all the earthly citizens of the world. Nay, we need not wonder at the amazement of even the truest and most faithful of Christians, when they saw the Church so wonderfully transformed into the likeness of the world.

"*And they worshipped the dragon, because he gave his authority unto the beast.*" We need not suppose this to mean direct formal worship rendered to the dragon, which we are to regard as a visible symbol of an invisible agent or agency. We worship power, or genius, or wisdom, when we see such embodied in any one man or community of men, and exalt or honour it beyond all proper measure. We worship the evil one, even when we doubt or deny his very existence, when we put more confidence in evil than in good, in falsehood than in truth, in dishonesty than in uprightness, in our endeavours to prosper or to rise in the world. This worship of Satan is very common among men—nay, is universal among the earthly or unspiritual citizens of the world. In all the engagements and business transactions of life, how much of this devil-worship might be found! Wherever moral evil abounds, all are tempted to honour and thus to worship it, or the evil one in it, when we see it

clothed with power, admired by thousands, and rising to the very highest position in life. How triumphant genius has been honoured and glorified, even when using the basest means to compass some ambitious end! No Satan may be seen, but the principle of evil has been exalted and adored. When, then, we trust in wrong, we worship the dragon, even though we may think we hate the great deceiver with all our heart. How vast an amount of dragon-worship do we find in the countless acts of wrong-doing, and the daring acts of cunning, of deception and the like, which too many are prone to regard as at least fair and honourable, if not of most laudable ambition! So, whilst the beast was seen to rise, the character of the means was ignored, and the grand success admired and praised.

"And they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? and who is able to war with him?" These words confirm the view just taken of the worship of the dragon, as not direct and formal, but rather indirect and implied, it may be thoroughly unconscious and unsuspected. *"They worship, saying, Who is like unto the beast? and who is able to war with him?"* The worship of strength, power, genius, greatness of every kind, has been perpetual and universal. How great and successful warriors have been worshipped, and that from age to age! "Hero-worship,"—who is entirely free from it? How the rulers of great empires have been worshipped and obeyed! How often is all the wrong done by men of towering ambition, unseen, uncondemned, palliated amidst the blaze of military genius and triumph and success! How many a man admired, worshipped and extolled to the very heavens, is simply regarded as no more than a wild beast in the eyes of the holy, righteous, gracious, and eternal God! Here we might refer to the two great visions of the Book of Daniel, relating to almost the entire future of the kingdoms of the world on the one hand, and of the kingdom of God and of His Christ on the other. In the one case we have the great image of gold and silver and brass and iron of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, all tending to exalt the greatness and glory of man. So it would do in the eyes of this great conqueror and mighty king of men. In the other case we have the same great warriors and kingdoms symbolised, not as they appear to those concerned or to mankind at large, but as they really are, and as they are viewed by the infinitely good and absolutely perfect Jehovah, even as so many great and wild beasts, which have lost the real dignity and glory of true manhood, and which have never risen to the level of the very lowest of the

despised and downtrodden saints in likeness and nearness to the great God in whose stead, like the beast of this vision, they have seemed to reign, and whose most sacred prerogatives they have most impiously usurped.

(3) "*And there was given to him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies. . . . And he opened his mouth for blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, even them that dwell in heaven.*" He fully resembles all the other heads on which were names of blasphemy. All were guilty of usurping the place and prerogatives of God, and of trampling under foot the distinguishing and truly divine nature of man. All this is quite consistent with the supposition that this restored head and all under his rule should professedly acknowledge God and Christ, and seem the most devoted servants of both. Jesus speaks of those who shall persecute and kill His own followers, and yet all the while think they do the service of God. Perhaps the greatest crimes ever committed on earth have been so in the name and by the supposed authority or even express command of God. This was certainly the case with the greatest crime ever committed, that of the crucifixion of the Son of God. We need not, then, seek for some such impious king or man of sin as would directly deny the very being of God, or use the most blasphemous words against God. This is true, though we seem here to be told the reverse, as it is said, "And he opened his mouth for blasphemies against God." Of course these words might mean the direct use of impious language as to God; but certainly they need not be held to imply more than we have said. When Christ Himself acknowledged to the high priest that He was the Son of God, the high priest at once charged Him with speaking blasphemy; and there would have been no impropriety in the use of the words, had not Jesus been in very deed what He acknowledged,—the Son of the Highest. Any one who would profess proudly and falsely to be in the place of God, or to be the Vicar of Jesus Christ, would thus be guilty of blasphemy against God and against Christ. On his head would be a name of blasphemy; and when he made demands on his subjects, or on any class of men, which only God or Christ had a right to make, he would open his mouth for blasphemy.

We are told also of blaspheming "*the tabernacle*" of God. We can here suppose nothing else as meant than the people of God, the true saints afterwards said to be overcome. Any one at the head of a false Church, nay, any one forming a living part of such a Church, could not fail to condemn and to speak evil of the true

Church. In the epistle to the Church in Smyrna we have a marked illustration of this: "I know thy tribulation . . . and the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan": this blasphemy against these Smyrnæan Christians or true Israelites was uttered by men falsely professing to be Jews or true Israelites.

"*And (or even) them that dwell in heaven.*" Whether the *καί*, *and*, should be retained, as in the Authorised, or rejected, as in the Revised text, does not appear of any real consequence: for, if rejected, *even* has to be supplied, and, if retained, it may be as well rendered *even* as *and*, as it ought to be in the writings of John more frequently than it has been in even the Revised Version. Retained or not, we certainly need not suppose, with Alford, that its retention would imply that these dwellers in heaven could only be the angels, and that these blasphemies were uttered against them. Even though we retained the *and* of the Authorised, the meaning would be very simple; the "tabernacle" representing the Church taken collectively, and "the dwellers in heaven" the same Church viewed individually, or in its individual membership; the expression "them that dwell in heaven" describing those whose citizenship is in heaven, and the like expression, "them that dwell on the earth," referring to those whose hearts are set on earthly things, and whose entire citizenship is on the earth. These true Christians, whose hearts were with Christ in heaven, and who were true subjects of "the kingdom of heaven" on earth, were reviled, condemned, blasphemed by those who professed to be the real Church of Christ, but who had become "the synagogue of Satan." All this might be illustrated by innumerable and most lamentable cases, not only in the history of the reign of this beast from the abyss, but in that of Churches of purer faith and now happily of milder practice.

Here we may distinctly say that many may be disposed to maintain that the fearful symbols of this place cannot possibly apply to at least many of the Popes and multitudes of the people. Afterwards it will be found that such multitudes of real Christians are treated in this Book as within the pale of the antichristian Church, as is clearly implied in the Divine call to "come out of her." In all the kingdoms or empires which are symbolised by wild beasts there may be multitudes of excellent persons, the spirit and government yet being such as to imply the real characters expressed by the symbols. A government is not the less despotic and impious because the king or emperor happens to be personally

an amiable and benevolent man. If the laws make no allowance for human reason or conscience, or for the worship and service of God according to that conscience or reason, they are simply not human, far less Divine, but simply and undeniably brutish; so that, officially, or as administering these laws, whatever his personal character, the ruler cannot but be regarded as justly, as divinely symbolised as we find here and in the Book of Daniel. Let a kingdom change and go on improving from age to age, as we find in the case of England, and the symbols will become less and less applicable; but never can they entirely cease to be so till the last fetter has been broken, and all that "liberty with which God makes His people free," or which He would have all men to enjoy, is fully secured. We cannot set limits to the susceptibility of mankind to be deluded by the power of education, and especially by false religion or the errors which may blend with the true. We cannot, therefore, determine how far true Christians may be under the influence of the antichristian system, or even how far men, true lovers of Christ, may be taught to regard office under such a system as most honourable in itself and most highly pleasing to Christ and to God. Emphatically might this be the case with the highest office of all.

We cannot deny that the mind may be so far perverted as to lead very many to regard the triple crown as the highest honour which God has conferred on man, and so prepare those, however personally devoted to Christ, who may be appointed, to accept the supposed gift, and thus to do what, if truly enlightened, they would regard with perfect abhorrence, and not do for the whole world. The high character of a Pope might fill us with wonder, but could not make Popery one whit other or better than it is. It would only appear the more antichristian that it could so delude any Christian as to make him believe that he was, or could be by any human suffrage, actually and divinely constituted the Vicar of Jesus Christ. Whatever, then, men may think of any of the Popes, the office of all is not the less truly to be condemned. We have just to keep in view the Encyclical and Syllabus of Pius IX., which Dr. Manning so highly magnifies, if we would clearly discriminate between the public and official person here symbolised, and the private and unofficial person whom he has thus so reverently and so gratefully and lovingly described: "Temporal Power of the Pope," pp. 169-70, "I do not know how any one can treat the trials of the Holy See as an abstraction. To me, at least, they come incorporated in the person, and visible in the image, of the most august and supernatural

presence I have ever known in life. The sufferings of the Holy See are the sufferings of the Holy Father. It is not the 'Cathedra Petri,' but the person of Pius IX., that comes before us when we turn our eyes and hearts upon this most unnatural warfare of sons against their Father. The sovereign dignity and the paternal sweetness of countenance, manner and voice; the playfulness, simplicity, and tenderness of saintly countenance and tone of him who for ten years has deigned to receive, direct, encourage, and console me in the most trying season of my life, were before me, even more vividly than at other times, when I was contemplating the present and the possible future of the Holy See."

(4) "*And there was given to him authority (or power) to continue forty and two months.*" This is the same period which we have already considered as either three years and a half or 1260 days. In all the cases, we have no doubt, the same antichristian power is in one way or another referred to. It may be a period in the history of the Church or of the witnesses; but still as that of persecution by that antichristian power. We have already found that this uniform period may not have in all cases one and the same beginning or end. Thus the witnesses might and did have too much reason for lamentation and prophesying in sackcloth before the woman fled before the face of the dragon; and now, this beast from the abyss, provided by the dragon to take his place and do his old hostile work, must be regarded, as a matter of consequence, to have begun his reign at some indefinite point after the flight referred to. Hence, if we are again to bring the *year-day* principle to a further experimental test, we must look for some marked event, or, much rather, some remarkable crisis, in the history of the professedly Christian Church, when there appeared, or when there came to a state of full development, such a power, such a king, such a kingdom, or such a politico-ecclesiastic system, as may be seen to be correctly and palpably symbolised by the beasts of this and the seventeenth chapters, and further indicated by what is said in this Book concerning them.

In dealing with such a subject, we must not fail to keep in view the fact, to which we have already referred, that, in the case of the history of any system whatever, whose rise and progress, decline and end, are slow and hardly traceable, we must not expect to find two such points as cannot fail to be seen to be the exact beginning and end of the period specially intended. In fact, in such a case, we should rather expect to find more than one apparent beginning and more than one apparent ending, as in the case of the seventy

years of the Babylonish captivity, which had at least two beginnings and two endings, with an interval of about eighteen years between. In this instance, for a long time, the year 606 used to be regarded as the beginning of the period in question; so that 1866 was looked forward to by many students of prophecy as a most eventful year in the history of the Papal and Protestant communities. By keeping exactly by the length of the year here stated, 360 days instead of 365, Fleming, as far back as 1704, had pointed to 1848, and not 1866, as a time of disaster to the Pope; and many were amazed to find that in that very year the Pope was compelled to seek for safety by flight from his own capital. Though restored by the aid of French soldiers and protected by them for years, he could not otherwise have retained his secular power. When, during the Franco-German war, these soldiers were withdrawn, he became utterly helpless, and the army of Victor Emmanuel entered the capital in 1870, almost immediately after what may well be accounted the last and greatest "name of blasphemy" had, at his own desire, and with the concurrence of the vast majority of his bishops, been written on his brow—the impious and blasphemous name of God, even *The Infallible*. Thus, within four short years of the anticipated date, 1866, the Pope fell from the rank of secular kings, and became, like other Italians, simply a subject of Victor Emmanuel, the first, and, we may say, the chosen king of renewed and reunited Italy. All this looks like a most marvellous fulfilment of prophecy and practical demonstration of the correctness of the year-day principle. However, we are by no means prepared to interpret this vision on principles of so exact and severe a method of calculation, but would rather take a more free and natural view of this wonderful prophecy, or of that most comprehensive and marvellous prophecy of Daniel which forms the basis of this. If we find, as we actually do, such a period as that of 1260 years, during which the head of this marvellous kingdom has had its predicted rank and power among and over so many nations, we may well acknowledge that the finger of God is here, that no human mind could of itself have foreseen and described the rise and reign and decay of such a unique and mighty and absolutely despotic kingdom on earth, due to the transformation or most terrible deformation of "the kingdom of heaven," that kingdom which its only proper Head so expressly declared to be "not of this world."

We have given one general answer to the question, when did this antichristian reign begin? We have said that the words of the twelfth chapter prove that it did not begin till some indefinite

period after the flight of the woman, which might, in keeping with the year-day system, be dated somewhere about the beginning of the fifth century. We have referred to 606, when the Pope was declared, by the imperial decree of Phocas, to be the universal bishop or head of the universal Church. We may now turn to the prophecy of Daniel to which this is so closely related. In chap. vii. 24, 25, we have, "And as for the ten horns, out of this kingdom," the fourth or Roman, "shall ten kings" or kingdoms "arise: and another shall arise after them: and he (or it) shall be diverse from the former, and he shall put down three kings. And he shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and he shall think to change the times and the law, and they shall be given into his hand until a time, times and half a time,"—three years and a half, or forty-two months, or 1260 days.

These words show to a perfect certainty that this king or kingdom of Daniel and that of John now under consideration are one and the same. Now, Daniel expressly shows that this kingdom, different from all other kingdoms, was to rise after the ten symbolised kingdoms arose out of the one Roman empire. We have thus a sufficiently clear, though indefinitely marked time, before which, at least, the reign of the beast from the abyss cannot be prophetically regarded as having begun. For the beginning in question, then, we may look for some point, or rather period, between the opening of the seventh and that of the ninth century. For the end, according to the year-day system, we should look for a corresponding point or period between A.D. 1860 and 2060. Should Papal Rome be justly said, in some way, to fall from its former lofty place in the temporal and spiritual worlds, at any time between these dates, the prophecy so interpreted and the time so calculated cannot but be accounted most amply and most marvellously fulfilled. For ages that prophecy, so far as the nature, the rise, the progress, the terrible history and the continued decay of the Papacy are concerned, has thus amply and marvellously been so; and all that has transpired in the past combines with all that we see in the present to give the fullest assurance that neither the character nor the date of the more or less distant end will at all prevent that fulfilment from being seen and acknowledged to be most real and complete.

Here we may quote the following from Cardinal Manning, which would seem to illustrate at once the correctness of our general interpretation and that of the year-day theory. We retain the above as it stood before we read the work from which we once more

quote, "The Temporal Power of the Vicar of Jesus Christ." P. ix.

"2. The history of the ten years between 1860 and 1870 is marked by a series of political and diplomatic frauds unequalled in history. The seizure of Ancona and the Marches, of Bologna and the Romagna; the Convention of 1864 between France and Italy, by which Italy bound itself to respect, and even to protect, the Holy See; the Garibaldian conspiracies and invasions; the duplicity of Sardinia; the complicity and countenance of Napoleon III., are all too well known to need more than recital. . . . 4. On the 20th of September, 1870, the Italian armies bombarded and entered Rome, but on the 4th of the same month the French empire had already ceased to be, and Napoleon III. was a prisoner in Germany." P. xiii.

"7. There is one point in which the present crisis of the Holy See and of the Christian world differs from all that has gone before it. Always in the ages past, when one or more of the European powers were in conflict with the Holy See, one or more of the other powers were friendly and gave it protection. Now not one stands in its defence. They have all, with one accord, hid their faces from the Vicar of our Lord. Some have violently wronged him; others have connived, through fear or complicity, and all are like Saul, who kept the clothes of those who stoned Stephen. They all consented in the deed: some by expressed assent, others by silence when they ought to speak. Of the hireling St. Gregory the Great says, 'Fugisti quia tacuisti.' The princes and rulers of Christendom have forsaken their Master, and their silence in the hour of danger is flight. Never till now have all the nations of Europe consented in the deed of those who have usurped Rome. Never till now has the public law of Europe been changed to sanction the usurpation. For the first time the Head of Christendom is excluded from the senate of Christian sovereigns. This universal abandonment, and common acquiescence in the wrongs of the Vicar of Jesus Christ is the characteristic of the present crisis. And as it is the climax of wrong, so it will be the decisive point in the conflict, and in the restitution of Christian Europe, if indeed its Christian order shall ever be restored." P. 181.

"Our Divine Lord committed to Peter and his successors the direction and guidance of the civil order which should arise in the world, of nations and their princes. . . . The sole tribunal on earth which can guide and direct the consciences of men is the Church of God, and this office centres in its Head. This, then, is the personal sovereignty which is inherent in the Pontificate of the Vicar of Jesus Christ. The local sovereignty is over that state, territory, and people which the providence of God

has committed to him. No one can read its history without perceiving that it was given by the same Divine will and the same Divine hand from which he received also his personal sovereignty in the beginning, and his liberation from all subjection. The conversion of the empire to Christianity, and then its removal, its banishment into the far East, freed the Vicar of Jesus Christ from temporal subjection ; and then, by the action of the same Providence, he was clothed with the prerogatives of a true and proper local sovereignty over that state and territory and people so committed to his charge. From that hour, which I might say was fifteen hundred years ago, or, to speak within limit, I will say was twelve hundred,"—just sixty short of the prophetic 1260,—“the Supreme Pontiff has been a true and proper Sovereign, exercising the prerogatives of royalty committed to him by the will of God over the people to whom he is father in all things, both spiritual and temporal.”

That we may note the beginning and the end of this vastly important period, we may quote the following :—P. xlv : “Now, by all the laws which govern the political changes of governments and people, if the Pontiffs had put forth their hands to take the sovereign power which was thus laid upon them, they might most justly have done so. . . . But they did not so. It was thrust upon them, and they put it from them. Like as our Divine Lord, when He saw that the people would come to take Him and make Him a King, fled into the mountain Himself alone, so His Vicars declined the character of sovereignty, and lamented the distractions and burdens of their secular care. Such was their state from the fifth to the seventh century. It was the political necessity of saving an abandoned and afflicted people from sufferings by war, by famine, by pestilence, of which the world has no parallel either for intensity or duration, that first invested the Roman Pontiffs with what has been well described as ‘a Sovereign Prefecture, and the Dictatorship of a Father.’” P. xlvii : “Pope Stephen III., who, when he returned from France after the alliance of Quiersy with Pepin, was received by the people of Rome with the salutation, ‘Pater Noster, et post Dominum Salus Nostra.’ For three hundred years before this event the Pontiffs had reigned supreme over the political and social order of Rome ; and that not only without opposition or jealousy from the people, but with a long tradition of loving and grateful attachment, of which no better expression can be found than in the letter of the Roman people to Pepin, in which the Senate and the whole people of Rome declare themselves as follows : ‘We are the firm and faithful servants of the Holy Church of God, and

of the thrice-blessed Prelate, your Spiritual Father in the Gospel, our Lord, Paul, supreme Pontiff and universal Pope, because he is our Father and best of Pastors, who ceases not daily to toil and contend for our safety, as did also his brother of holy memory, our **most blessed Lord Pope Stephen.**”

In this way the temporal power of the Pope began, according to the Cardinal, long before the beginning of the seventh century, but may be said at least to have then been confirmed,—in fact, according to the usual date, in A.D. 606, the date of the decree of Phocas above referred to. However, a later date is referred to by the Cardinal. P. xlix: “And here I cannot forbear, in passing, to point out the fact that the invasions of the Lombards were with the avowed intention of forming a United Italy, under their own northern sovereignty; and that the main obstacle and chief end of their ambition was Rome. The intervention of Charlemagne put an end to the barbarian invasions, and to the experiments at an armed Italian unity, renewed from time to time by the emperors of Germany, and now in our days by Sardinia. ‘The situation,’ as the phrase is, has nothing new in it, and its issue bids fair, in the end, to be the same. After the restitution by Pepin and Charlemagne of the states which the Lombards had usurped, the Pontiffs Stephen III. and St. Leo III. exercised the most explicit power of sovereignty. . . . In afterwards consecrating Charlemagne to the empire, St. Leo did not extinguish his own independence, nor create one superior to himself.” We have been quoting fully, but it is important to note what bears closely on the point in question, and thus to make use of the authority of so distinguished a prince of the Church of Rome.

We may therefore add the following from another work of Cardinal Manning—“*Petri Privilegium: Three Pastoral Addresses to the Clergy of the Diocese:*” “The Vatican Council,” etc., p. 53: “All other questions, on which little divergence of opinion existed, might well be left to a smaller number of Bishops. But a doctrine which for centuries had divided both Pastors and people, the defining of which was contested by a numerous and organised opposition, needed to be treated and affirmed by the most extensive deliberation of the Bishops of the Catholic Church. Add to this, the many perils which hung over the continuance of the Council; of which I need but give one example. The outbreak of a war might have rendered the definition impossible. And in fact the infallibility of the Roman Pontiff was defined on the eighteenth of July, and war was officially declared on the following day.” P. 158: “I have said

already, that the definition was made on the eighteenth of July, and war on the nineteenth. Since that date, a crowd of events have hurried to their fulfilment. The French empire has passed away. Rome is occupied by the armies of Italy." P. 160: "For a thousand years his independence, which is sovereignty, has been secured by the providence of God in the temporal power over Rome, the narrow sphere of his exemption from all civil subjection. But men are now-a-days wiser than God, and would unmake and mend His works. They are therefore dissolving the temporal power as He has fashioned it; and in so doing, they are striking out the keystone of the arch which hangs over their own heads."

On all this we may make the following remarks :—

First. Cardinal Manning, as a sincere Roman Catholic, of course reads history according to his own convictions; looks upon the Bishop of Rome's liberation from imperial control, and his rise to full temporal sovereignty through the aid of Pepin and Charlemagne, as no mere political facts to be judged by their own character, but as express and irreversible ordinances of God. By the Popes this sovereignty was not sought, but thrust upon them: they resembled Christ when He refused to be made a King by the people; but the Cardinal forgets to record the difference between Christ and His so-called Vicars—namely, that whilst He refused once for all, they at the most showed only some little coyness, and then laid hold of the crown as if for ever.

Secondly. All that we proposed to do, namely, to illustrate the year-day theory, we find, we may say, most marvellously done by these extracts. Whilst we have not by any means pressed the idea of any very exact period, we find Cardinal Manning encouraging those who hold by such exactness, by showing that the temporal reign of the Pope, from its real beginning to its seemingly certain end, has exactly extended to the very length assigned to it by those interpreters of prophecy. They used to say from A.D. 606 to 1866, the predicted 1260 prophetic days or literal years. Cardinal Manning has referred to the opening of the seventh century; and then he tells us of the awful period of from 1860 to 1870, when the Pope was forsaken of all his crowned friends, and when by "the public law of Europe" . . . for the first time the Head of Christendom is excluded from the senate of Christian sovereigns." The reign began, say, 600—610; continued, according to the year-day system, 1260 years; and terminated, according to it and according to the above, 1860—1870. As yet, then, no experimental evidence has appeared to overthrow the year-day theory. Instead of this, to

some it will thus appear proved to demonstration. We may, however, add, that the temporal authority having been finally established first by the emperor Pepin, and afterwards by his son, the emperor Charlemagne, in the beginning of the ninth century, we may, as the Cardinal thus suggests, regard this date as that of the second beginning of the temporal reign of the Popes. In this way, as above, we have a margin of two hundred years; so that the period between 1860 and 2060 remains, in keeping with the year-day theory, for the further decay and complete fall of the papal kingdom. If we assume a still less distant date as really a third beginning, when the Roman Pontiff, in the person of Gregory VII., the mighty Hildebrand, raised that kingdom to its greatest height of power over the kings and nations of the world, we must add over another two hundred years to the margin in question. However, be this as it may, up to the present time the prediction seems amply and marvellously fulfilled. In recent years the Papacy has received blow after blow. The increase of population may suggest even an increase of strength. It cannot justly do so. During the last fifty or sixty years Protestantism has made, comparatively, a vastly greater numerical progress. If we remember that one or two centuries form no great period in the history of nations and religions, the vast changes of these fifty or sixty years will not fail to suggest that the beginning of the end has assuredly come.

However, it should be remembered that we have been simply bringing the year-day theory to the test of historical interpretation. We are now prepared to affirm that no fact has been met to overthrow it. At the same time, the truth of this Book, viewed as pointing to the Church of Rome as antichristian, is by no means affected by the rejection of that theory. Only, in this case, the numbers must be regarded as simply mystical, and then we are led to contemplate the rise and terrible reign and present decay of that very Church. We still have a most wonderful apocalypse of the fearful apostasy foretold by the apostle Paul. The whole has been historically verified. Just as the anti-Messianic nation of Israel stands forth before the eyes of all men as an infallible prophetic witness to the Divine, though rejected, mission of Jesus; so does the antichristian Church of Rome now stand forth, with still greater and more impressive effect, before all who are spiritually acquainted with the New Testament, as a like prophetic witness to the absolutely certain reality of the same glorious mission. As the restored true Church rises to her apostolic purity and power, the contrast will show the very presence of Christ.

3. *Vers. 7-10.* "And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and there was given to him authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation. And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, (every one) whose name hath not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb that hath been slain from the foundation of the world. If any man hath an ear, let him hear. If any man (is) for captivity, into captivity he goeth: if any man shall kill with the sword, with the sword must he be killed. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints."

(1) "*And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them.*" We need not say much in the way of interpretation with respect to this. This triumphant and most terrible war of Papal Rome against all, against whom the dragon, through this most mysterious vicegerent, waged perpetual war,—namely, "the rest of the seed of the woman, which keep the commandments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus,"—may well be described as the most awful, the most cruel, the most unrelenting, the most wicked, the most impious, and, as carried on in the very name of Christ and of God, the most mysterious war ever carried on in this our world.

(2) "*And there was given to him authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation.*" The extent of this antichristian kingdom was marvellous, as well as its character. The power of Rome over the nations of Europe was immense. All kings and kingdoms acknowledged the authority here referred to. We need not say that such strong general terms are not to be taken of actually the whole world. This kingdom was specially related to the sphere of the old Pagan Roman empire.

The only objection of seeming force might be urged on the ground that the Papal dominions never extended eastward over what was once included in that vast empire. This objection may appear to some insuperable. Nor would it be easy to find a satisfactory answer within the Apocalypse itself: at least, we know of none. In the original prophecy, however, of this very kingdom we seem to find what we think ought to satisfy. In Dan. vii., whilst we have a clear revelation of the four successive kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome, and whilst these are said to subdue one another, till the last or Roman is represented as embracing all the others, we are told expressly, that, though the fourth or Roman is to be completely destroyed (ver. 12), "as for the rest of the beasts," the other three and preceding kingdoms, "their dominion was taken away," as we have said, the one being subdued

by the other, "yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time," for some indefinite period; implying that, after being conquered by Rome and ruled over by her, they were prophetically separated from her, and, for aught involved in the prediction, destined to exist, some or all of them, after Rome, in the sense intended, had utterly perished. Greece, then, and the East, are thus expressly excluded from Western Rome, or Rome properly so called, which alone is thus to be regarded as the real and only sphere of the prophecy under review, whether of Daniel or of John. This seems fully to account for the fact that the Christian Church of the East, that usually called the Eastern, and the remnants of Churches still more remote, as the Armenian and Syrian, are not included.

Here all is instructive, and nothing defective. The more this is contemplated, the more will the prophecy appear remarkable and certainly Divine. Why should Daniel have been enabled so pointedly to refer to Western Rome, and so palpably to exclude the antichristian kingdom from the field of the Greek or Eastern Church? Or, why should John, in unveiling the great apostasy set forth by Paul, be led to pass over those Churches which, in his day, were really more powerful than that of Rome? John knew much regarding the spirit and character of the Churches of the East and of the West; but Daniel could know nothing of the characteristics of either. Yet, as we have found, when pointing to the little horn with its mouth speaking great and blasphemous things, he could have no known reason for not only pointing to the West, but also, by a seemingly passing and valueless allusion, to the other three kingdoms of his prophecy, leading us not to seek for the great antichristian kingdom in the East, or as the result of the perversion or paganisation of the Eastern Church. Assuredly the Spirit of God is here.

However, we must not infer, because of this, that the Apocalypse contains no allusion and no lesson to the Eastern Church. As we have often had to remark, "the mystery of iniquity" was at work in the East at least in apostolic times. Paul expressly declared to the bishop-elders of the Church of Ephesus that from among them would arise false teachers, and thus that the antichristian spirit would show its terribly perverting power there. That spirit, we may justly say, was more or less constantly and for ages at work within very many, if not within all the Churches, and that, we may safely add, in the East and in the West alike. Up to the time of the separation of the Eastern and Western, both were remarkably like in

spirit and constitution, as if moulded and more or less perverted under the influence of the same evolutionary forces. In this way, whatever errors and corruptions, common to both, survived that separation, or may remain to the present day, if condemned in the apocalyptic vision of Rome, we must regard as at the same time condemned in the case of the East. It is well to keep this in view. The same is to be remembered as applicable to all Churches, even those which deem themselves most remote from Rome and her antichristian spirit and practice. The world in any Church is abhorrent to the true Head of the Church. Let all Christians take heed. Let all Churches seek to be of apostolic constitution; and yet let them remember they are worthless in the eyes of Jesus, if they fail to maintain His spirit and character.

(3) "*And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, (every one) whose name hath not been written in the book of life of the Lamb that hath been slain from the foundation of the world.*" By "*all that dwell on the earth*" is by no means to be understood all the inhabitants of the world, but all who are of the earth, or of this world alone, as contrasted with those above spoken of as dwelling in heaven. This contrast between the unconverted and the converted, the mere citizens of the world and the subjects of the kingdom of heaven, is here clearly set forth, and should be kept in mind in the treatment of other passages. The correctness of this may be regarded as really demonstrated by the words which follow,—"*(every one) whose name hath not been written in the book of life.*" Those who dwell in heaven, and those whose names are so written, are one and the same class: all true Christians—all, as elsewhere said, sealed with the seal of God. Those who dwell on the earth are the unsealed, the unconverted, who have never been born in Zion, and whose names, therefore, are not written in the book of life. All this is in keeping with what we found set forth in the vision of the locusts or of the rise of this beast from the abyss,—all were hurt by these satanic agents, save those who were sealed of God. Such are beyond the reach of deadly deception. The same holds good in the case of Paul's description of the man of sin, the same antichristian power as that under consideration: those are exposed to delusion, and actually become deluded, who "receive not the love of the truth that they might be saved." Thus the man of sin, the agency from the abyss, and this beast whose deadly wound was healed and which is thus called the beast from the abyss, are all the same dreadful agency, and are all treated in the same way, by those who will not seek salvation on the one hand, and by those who are actually

saved on the other. A fearful state of corruption is thus alluded to. Mere nominal Christians are deceived, and worship the beast. True and faithful Christians escape the deception, and so worship the true Head of the Church, and Him alone.

To have one's name written in the Lamb's book of life is to be treated by the Lamb as a true and faithful subject, as one born from above or of the Holy Spirit, born in Zion and so into the family of God. This book may be viewed as virtually a register of the births of the children of God and heirs of heaven, or of those who receive Christ and so obtain "power to become the sons of God, even all who believe in His name," or, as above said, all true Christians. We have here a mode of expression which implies such ambiguity as naturally leads to difference of opinion,—“written in the book of life of the Lamb that hath been slain from the foundation of the world,” suggesting the idea of the Lamb as being in some sense slain before the world was, and, we may say, therefore, in “the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God”; or “written from the foundation of the world in the book of the Lamb that hath been slain,” suggesting that the birth or conversion to God of every one of these was thus foreknown and so recorded. The latter would seem the more natural idea; the former the more natural translation of the words. If we adopt that which implies the foreknowledge of conversion, then we may regard “of the Lamb slain,” or only “slain,” as introduced parenthetically, and yet emphatically. So far as the essential meaning is concerned, it does not seem of great consequence whether the foreknowledge is regarded as referring to the death of Christ or to the spiritual birth of Christians. The most important thing expressed is the fact that only those who possess a new and divine nature, or are the subjects of the new and heavenly birth, and who have so true and full and delightful a knowledge of the slain Lamb, the real and only Head of the Church, are safe from the fearful deception alluded to, or can infallibly detect what may be called the really bestial nature, the true heathenish character, the fearfully antichristian spirit, of this pretended head of the Church, pretended representative or Vicar of Christ on earth. We have already referred to what is implied in the worship of the beast. It implies that his real character is unseen, that he is viewed as more than even man, not so much angelic as actually divine, “the great Power of God,” as Simon Magus was called, some one so inspired and exalted by God as to be treated, honoured, obeyed as if he were God—in fact, regarded, adored, followed, worshipped as the Sovereign Infallible One.

(4) "*If any man hath an ear, let him hear. If any man is for captivity, into captivity he goeth: if any man shall kill with the sword, with the sword must he be killed. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.*" These brief and somewhat obscure words seem addressed to true Christians, and to all who are in danger of yielding to the fascinations of the deceiver, or to the fear of suffering persecution in case of faithful testimony. "*If any man hath an ear, let him hear.*" Let him listen and mark well. He will need all his attention to understand, and all his heart to act accordingly. At such a period of universal deception and corruption, it would be hard for even the spiritually-minded to take in the truth, or to believe that such vast multitudes of professing Christians could possibly be deceived, or that they, so few and feeble, could alone be on the right side, the side of Christ and of God. Let them, then, hear the voice of God. Not only let them mark what has been said of this antichristian power, but let them hear what God would have them, in the strange and awful circumstances, to do.

"*If any man is for captivity, into captivity he goeth.*" Underlying this announcement, there seems to be a reference to Israel and ancient Babylon and the great Captivity. In that case, the good as well as the bad had to go. Here it would appear as if the voice was that of solemn warning against the danger of giving way to the power of another Babylon,—as if it were said, If any man, to escape the evils of persecution, and of this great spiritual warfare, will yield himself up as conquered and so as a captive, a captive he will certainly become, and a slave he will certainly be. Let no one, for the sake of even life itself, yield to the deceiver, who would retain true and unspeakably precious liberty, the liberty of the sons of God; but, if any one will purchase freedom from suffering, or even freedom from death, by yielding in the hour of trial, let him know that a miserable captive and a degraded bondsman, far from home, from Christ, from God, from glory, he is destined to become.

"*If any man shall kill with the sword, with the sword must he be killed.*" These, as well as the preceding words, we must remember were addressed to Divinely opened ears, and therefore to those who belonged to that kingdom which is not of this world, and so had, the King Himself being witness, no deadly weapon to wield. So they are here faithfully counselled to act consistently, and in real character, and to wield no carnal weapon, even in defence of themselves as subjects of that kingdom, or of the precious faith delivered to them. If they do so, they are here warned of danger and of death. They cannot claim the protection of Him, whose

servants He allowed to wield no sword to protect Himself. This seems to have been the meaning of Jesus, when He said, "Put up the sword, . . . he that taketh the sword shall perish with the sword." He spoke of His own kingdom and of its true subjects, and not as a king of this world addressing the subjects of an earthly kingdom. Whatever, therefore, may be the teaching of Scripture elsewhere, we cannot fairly draw from His words the certain conclusion, that the kingdoms of this world, or His people viewed as subjects of such kingdoms, are in these words forbidden to protect themselves by force when assailed by unlawful, cruel and deadly aggressive force. God or Christ would have clearly and impressively distinguished between the true kingdom of heaven and that false and perverted kingdom which still called itself by that sacred name; and so points to this special mark of the former, by warning all subjects of the Prince of Peace against all connection with any people who proved their worldly character by the use of the weapons of worldly warfare. If Zwingli had had ears to hear this, he would not have fallen on the battle-field, and permanently injured the Reformation in Switzerland.

"*Here is the patience and the faith of the saints*"—the saints just spoken of. And saints or Christians in such a position would require the greatest patience and the strongest faith. How sad their circumstances—how fearful their danger—how apparently helpless and hopeless their state! Assailed by cruel and relentless foes, who made use of every carnal weapon, and yet required to stand still and to wield no such weapons in return, they could only exercise the patience and faith which are here commended to them and required of them. During the long and dreadful reign of this false representative of Christ, and amidst what must have appeared endless and incurable corruption, their faith in Christ must have been tried to the very utmost. Only the almighty grace of God could preserve the faith and maintain the hopes of the few and devoted witnesses of Christ. On the one side there was the most marvellous manifestation of the mystery of iniquity; and on the other quite as marvellous a manifestation of the mystery of godliness.

4. *Vers. 11-18.* "And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like unto a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the authority of the first beast in his sight. And he maketh the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose death-stroke was healed. And he doeth great signs, that he should even make fire to come down out of heaven upon the earth in

the sight of men. And he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by reason of the signs which it was given him to do in the sight of the beast ; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, who hath the stroke of the sword, and lived. And it was given (unto him) to give breath to it, (even) to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as should not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the bond, that there be given them a mark on their right hand, or upon their forehead ; and that no man should be able to buy or to sell, save he that hath the mark, (even) the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. He that hath understanding, let him count the number of the beast ; for it is the number of a man ; and his number is Six hundred and sixty and six."

(1) "*And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth.*" We may make a too marked distinction between the sea and the earth out of which these two beasts are said to rise. Thus, in what we have called the original vision, in the seventh chapter of Daniel, whilst the four great beasts are said, ver. 3, to "come up from the sea," in the interpretation which is given we are told, ver. 17, that "These great beasts . . . are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth." In this way, the purely worldly or earthly origin of all seems mainly intended. At least, we are thus taught to beware of attaching any great stress to the distinction expressed. We are assured that neither is of Divine or heavenly origin. According to the mind of Christ, all who are not from above are from beneath ; all who are not of God are of the evil one. This second beast, then, is of the earth, and also from beneath ; rising from among "them who dwell in the earth," as contrasted with "them that dwell in heaven." He is elsewhere called "the false prophet," chap. xix. 20. The chief distinction between the first beast and the second clearly is, that, whilst the former is a false king, the latter is a false prophet ; the one upholding the other by his deceptive spiritual power, and being upheld by the other by his regal secular power. The real character of both will appear as the various details are carefully studied and understood.

(2) "*And he had two horns like unto a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.*" He had all the appearance of a gentle, innocent, harmless lamb ; but such was not his nature, for he spoke with all the subtlety of the old serpent, and with all the cruelty of a wild beast. Here there seems an allusion to the Lamb, whose sacrificial death has just been alluded to. This second agent resembles Him so

far at least in appearance, but differs from Him essentially in heart. At the same time, if he really does imitate Christ, he seems to do so rather in His prophetic office than in His sacerdotal. We have here a most striking symbol of a pretending teacher or prophet. Well did Christ warn His disciples against those who came in sheep's clothing, but who inwardly were as "ravening wolves"! How different the manners from the morals of all such!

(3) "*And he exerciseth all the authority of the first beast in his sight.*" As to himself, he pretends to have no great power. The secular arm does not belong to him. His is the purely spiritual or religious sphere. His it is to reveal the mind and to expound the truth of God. As the other has a divine right to reign, he has a like right to teach. In this way he is in some sense higher in real power than the other, to whom he may convey messages from heaven, and whose very infallibility as a ruler may so far depend on his prophetic announcements, just as the kings of ancient Israel were often instructed and taught how to rule by the prophets expressly sent from God. Such are his lowly, yet lofty pretensions, his profound humility, yet immeasurable pride. He is the prime minister of the great spiritual and temporal king. Through his spiritual agency the perverted nations not only obey, but worship that mysterious king. He represents the whole teaching agency, the whole sacerdotal and prophetic ministry of the new empire of Paganism under the name of the one true and universal kingdom of Jesus Christ.

(4) "*And he maketh the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose death-stroke was healed.*" He himself is of the earth, not of heaven; and he succeeds in deceiving the earthly, or those whose only real home is this world. He professedly leads them to Christ, but really leads them to exalt and worship him who usurps the throne of Christ, and who, in the name of Christ, professes most righteously and beneficently to rule, both spiritually and temporally, the whole world. The people, mistaught and deluded by this perverted ministry, this lamb-like, dragon-inspired "false prophet," exalt the great representative of God and of Christ, and real substitute for both. It is not the beast in his original pagan form, or before receiving his death-stroke, which he so magnifies, but under his second or resurrection pagan or anti-christian form, as is here most carefully noted, and as it is again alike carefully noted in ver. 14—"they should make an image to the beast, who hath the stroke of the sword, and lived." If this were rightly observed, the error of some, who suppose a reference

to the images of the pagan Roman emperors, could not possibly be committed. This "false prophet" does not directly exalt the Paganism which Christianity wounded to death or utterly destroyed, but supports the new Paganism, which is essentially a revival of the old, or the old raised from the dead, and yet called by the sacred name of Christianity, true apostolic Christianity, only Christianity fully developed, the full-grown man of whom apostolic Christianity was the raw half-grown and untutored youth, the Christianity of Christ vastly improved and invigorated through the educational discipline of this lamb-like, dragon-inspired, prophetic ministry.

(5) *"And he doeth great signs, that he should even make fire to come down out of heaven upon the earth, in the sight of men. And he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by reason of the signs which it was given him to do in the sight of the beast."* This false prophet follows the example of the true prophets of ancient times, and of Christ and His apostles, in this, that he seeks to give the Divine attestation of significant miracles to the reality of his mission and the truth of his doctrine, especially to the Divine right of the first or resurrection beast, the beast of paganised Christianity. In this he supplies another mark of the identity of both beasts, viewed as really one combined agency, with "the man of sin" described by Paul in 2 Thess. ii. 9, 10, "whose coming is according to the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that are perishing; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." Here are the same signs and lying wonders, wrought in the sight and so with the self-exalting approbation of the first beast, and accepted by the very same class of people, the earthly or "dwellers on the earth," or "them that are perishing because they receive not the love of the truth that they might be saved." These deceptive miracles and teachings were wonderfully successful. They have been so for many ages. They are so, but to a remarkably reduced extent, still. The tendency of those who love not the truth, or who dwell on the earth, to believe in miraculous interpositions, true or false, has been greatly lessened, and the power of this ministry greatly limited, and the divine right of the mysterious king widely, within his nominal kingdom, not only doubted, but expressly denied.

(6) *"Saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, who hath the stroke of the sword, and lived. And it was given (unto him) to give breath to it, (even) to*

the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as should not worship the image of the beast should be killed." The false prophet persuades the deluded subjects of the beast, not only to worship him, but to make an image through which they might openly worship him. Such an image was made of the pagan emperors; and many a Christian suffered for refusal to worship or to cast incense on the altar before it. Alford so thoroughly overlooks the reiterated reference to the death-stroke of this vision as to say that this is a mere statement of historical fact, and that the image of the reigning emperor would be meant. The forgetfulness of all proper date thus implied is strange. John is not speaking of his own time. This vision relates to a marked future time. We may fully admit that the image of the pagan emperor was inclusively glanced at, but that here spoken of was recommended by a ministry which rose long after the time of John, and was intended for the worship of an emperor who did not ascend the throne of the Cæsars till the last of the Cæsars had long passed away. This image rather reminds us of the great image reared in the plain of Dura for the first of the four imperial heads or beasts of Daniel, even Nebuchadnezzar, who thus accepted the deifying worship of his subjects, and who illustrated thus the proud assumption of divine honours by great heathen conquerors and kings. Here this proposal of the false prophet simply indicates that this nominally Christian emperor or king was quite in the hereditary line of those proud pagans who would be gods, and who would not be content without the impious worship as well as the slavish obedience of their subjects. We are not prepared to say that a literal image is here intended. In the words which follow we cannot suppose the mark and the number of the name of the beast were literally put upon the right hand or the forehead of his devoted subjects. So here we seem by no means constrained at least to say that a literal image was actually intended. The idea of an open and undoubted conduct towards the Power symbolised by the first beast, implying a virtual worship of that Power or virtual acknowledgment of his divinity, must certainly have been implied.

The words which follow, indeed, appear to imply more—namely, that "it was given (to him), to give breath, spirit, or life to the image." The exact meaning of this we may not be able to determine. If an actual image had been intended, then we might conclude that what was meant was, that, as this false prophet wrought many delusive miracles and presented many unreal signs to "them who dwelt on the earth," so he continued to deceive by making the image so to

speak as to pronounce the doom of death on all who would not, as in the case of the golden image of Nebuchadnezzar, fall down and worship. Of this other views have been taken. An image is viewed as simply a representation, and then some person, some agency, some thing has been sought out in the history of Papal Rome which would thus represent this mysterious king. This representation is then supposed to have been so endowed with life or power as to be able to bring about the death of all who failed to obey. We are not prepared to accept any theory with which we are acquainted. Nor do we think any such definite interpretation needful, or the want of it any real loss. The words are clear and easily understood, if we are content to accept the main and most important sense conveyed by them—a sense most amply illustrated and verified by the plainest facts of history—that the false prophet so misled and so paganised the nominal Christians intended, that they not only worshipped, after the lowest and most debasing and idolatrous forms, this deified successor of Nebuchadnezzar and all the other pagan emperors, but led, by the open practice of that idolatry, to the condemnation and death of many whose totally different conduct could not but expose them to the fearful consequences of detection.

(7) "*And he causeth all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the bond, that there be given them a mark on their right hand, or upon their forehead; and that no man should be able to buy or to sell, save he that hath the mark, (even) the name of the beast or the number of the beast or the number of his name.*" Here we have a symbol of universal slavish subjection, from which no class, however rich and powerful, could escape. We are not to think of a literal mark, but of such a profession or acknowledgment as would be rightly symbolised by such a mark on the hand, the symbol of service to be rendered or strength to be devoted, and on the head, the symbol of reason and mind to be consecrated,—all, of every rank, from the king to the slave, must acknowledge themselves, in body and soul, in life and power, subject to the beast, who is thus declared to be possessed of absolute civil and religious, political and spiritual, despotic power over all on the earth spoken of. That there need be no external mark, we find proof in the opening of next chapter, where a mark of a very different reference is spoken of—that of the 144,000 with the Lamb on Mount Zion, "having His Father's name written on their foreheads." In this there seems to be a clear reference to their genuine spiritual likeness to Christ (the Lamb) and to His and their heavenly Father. So here the

mark will imply likeness, in spirit and character, of the subject multitude to the despotic and most unrighteous and most unmerciful beast. In neither case need we or ought we to suppose a literal mark. How fearful the despotism here implied! How terrible the lot of those who had the true divine mark in the midst of such cruel and relentless persecution! They were really doomed to starvation and death. How far all this may relate to mere civil intercourse, we may not exactly know. However, as the words seem expressly explanatory of the end or design of the symbolic mark, and not descriptive of it, by taking them literally we do not fall into the error which we have had to notice as very injurious, of confounding the symbol with the thing symbolised.

(8) *"Here is wisdom. He that hath understanding, let him count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man. And his number is six hundred and sixty and six."* *"Here is wisdom."* Many have sought this wisdom by endeavouring to find some name represented by this number. Something more and higher is intended. The discovery of such a name may be finally made. All the truly wise or spiritual or Christian may be able to make it practically and profitably, though not literally. He who is able clearly and certainly to understand this chapter, or to know what is here mystically represented under the symbol of the beast, and who is thus taught how to conduct himself towards the true King of Zion and towards this and every like usurper of His throne, most assuredly possesses the divine wisdom and understanding here chiefly meant, though he may be totally ignorant of the very meaning of the expressions "number of the beast" and "number of a man," whether they are to be taken mystically or literally. This divine wisdom belongs only to those endowed with a new and spiritual nature, those who "have an anointing from the Holy One, and know all things," and who can thus discern between "the holy and the profane," between the earthly and the heavenly, between Christ and Antichrist, between the things which belong to the former and those which belong to the latter. This divine, this pure-hearted, quick-eyed wisdom is needed at all times; though, as here, most of all for the detection of the corruptions of the Church and truth of Jesus Christ.

"He that hath understanding, let him count the number of the beast." As just hinted, the great thing is to recognise the beast himself, not only as here described, but also, and especially in all his modified forms, with the kingdom of which he is the head, and also in all other communities which may be influenced directly or indirectly, by inheritance or otherwise, by his spirit. His mark, his

very image, may possibly be seen on many people, and on some communities, seemingly most thoroughly opposed to his character and claims. All need to strive, to study and to pray, that Christ may dwell truly and richly in their hearts, that they may make the sacred Scriptures their constant and only guide, and that all the Churches with which they are connected may become more and more pure and apostolic and Christian. Whilst the Church should ever go forth to conquer the world for Christ, the world is ever ready to enter the Church in one form or another, and to make it the slave of the animating spirit of this mystic beast.

"For it is the number of a man." This would seem to be added to show that what is thus proposed to be done may be really or literally done. The meaning is not, that we are to endeavour to find out some actual person or individual man, whose number, or the number of whose name, is that here given; but that we are to regard the mode of calculation as that known to be used by men. This seems evident from chap. xxi. 17, where, of the angel with "the golden reed to measure the city," it is said, "he measured the wall thereof, 144 cubits, (according to) the measure of a man, that is, of an angel"; suggesting, first, the ordinary mode of human measurement, and next, the withdrawal of that literal mode by explaining that an angelic or mystical mode was intended. Here the literal is stated, but not explained or withdrawn—as if to imply that it was to be employed. Besides, only thus viewed could the expression suggest a reason for any one doing as challenged. The reference thus is to a not uncommon custom of using the numerical value of names for the names themselves. In illustration, an example has been adduced from the Epistle of Barnabas, in which the name of Jesus in Greek letters is given as = 888: thus $I = 10 + \eta = 8 + \sigma = 200 + o = 70 + v = 400 + \sigma = 200 = 888$. We need not say that endless have been the attempts to find out some appropriate name whose numerical equivalent will be that here called the number of the beast, even 666. We need hardly note that that number has, but with no sufficient authority, been altered to 616. Whether any real name is to be sought has been more than doubted. We cannot magnify the importance of the matter, as many seem to do; and yet we are not prepared to look upon it as an enigma purely mystical, and not intended to receive any literal solution.

We have long considered that suggested, but not adopted, by Irenæus—namely *Ααρεινος*—as, of all we have ever known, the most simple, the most natural, the most appropriate, nay, the most clearly and certainly actual, whether really intended or not.

We say "most appropriate," as agreeing with the whole description of the beast as the fourth or Roman empire of Daniel; and "most clearly and certainly actual," as expressly pointing to that Church which alone can be called the Latin Church, and which we are fully assured is the very Church and kingdom here alluded to. We have added, "whether really intended or not," to express the thought that we do not need to find out the very name by means of this number, as we have the most ample means, in this and other parts of this Book, by which that name may be assuredly, we might say infallibly, discovered. We might here refer to other names; and would only repeat that they cannot be compared with this. The Head being meant, *Aareivos, Lateinos*, is, as it ought to be, in the masculine form.

We shall only allude to one which has been adopted from Vitringa by Hengstenberg—namely, that the number is to be sought for in Scripture alone, and that this number is to be found, as it is said, "in only one instance in the whole Old Testament in connection with a name." This remark implies that the expression "the number of a man" means the number of some individual man, and not the number or way of numerical reckoning used by men, as we have illustrated by the kindred expression in chap. xxi. 17, "the measure of a man." He goes on: "It is said in Ezra ii. 13, 'The children of Adonikam, 666.' The name Adonikam must therefore be the name of the beast. It was admirably fitted for being so. It means, 'The Lord arises,' and is in excellent agreement with the watchword of the worshippers of the beast, 'Who is like unto the beast? and who is able to make war with him?'" We have quoted enough. In a list of families which returned from captivity, one is said to consist of 666 persons, and this is deemed undoubted evidence that the name of their ancestor, Adonikam, most likely given to him in token of the reverent faith of his parents, must be "the name of the beast."

As we have said, the solution of this question is by no means essential to the sufficient knowledge of the antichristian powers here symbolised. We have given the one which, from first to last, we have regarded as most appropriate; and shall now close by quoting the following from Alford, as expressing what we have long thought, and that in the fittest manner. "The number *may* be calculated; and is *intended to be known*: for (gives a reason why the calculation should be made) *it is the number of a man* (i.e. is counted as men generally count), *and the number of it* (the beast) *is six hundred and sixty-six*. Of all the hundreds of attempts which have been made in answer to the challenge, there is but one

which seems to approach near enough to an adequate solution to require serious consideration. And that one is the word mentioned, though not adopted, by Irenæus (v. 30. 3, p. 330) viz., *λατῆινος* (the diphthong *ει* being, as all critical students of the Greek text know, not only an allowable way, but the usual way, of writing the long *ι* by the Greeks of the time: ($\lambda=30$) + ($\alpha=1$) + ($\tau=300$) + ($\epsilon=5$) + ($\iota=10$) + ($\nu=50$) + ($\omicron=70$) + ($\varsigma=200$) = 666. This name describes the common character of the rulers of the former Pagan Roman empire,—‘*Latini sunt qui nunc regnant*,’ Iren.: and, which Irenæus could not foresee, unites under itself the character of the latter Papal Roman empire also, as revived and kept up by the agency of its false prophet the priesthood. The Latin Empire, the Latin Church, Latin Christianity, have ever been its commonly current appellations: its language, civil and ecclesiastical, has ever been Latin: its public services, in defiance of the most obvious requisite for public worship, have ever been throughout the world conducted in Latin: there is no one word which could so completely describe its character, and at the same time unite the ancient and modern* attributes of the two beasts, as this. Short of saying absolutely that this *was* the word in St. John’s mind, I have the strongest persuasion that no other can be found approaching so near to a complete solution.”

These words will lose hardly a particle of their argumentative force, by that strong hesitation which so reveals the extreme caution of the writer in relation to this subject, which he expresses in his “Prolegomena,” § v., par. 32, “Still less can I offer any satisfactory solution of the prophetic number of the beast. Even while I print my note in favour of *Λατῆινος* of Irenæus, I feel almost disposed to withdraw it. It is beyond question the best solution that has been given: but that it is not *the* solution, I have a persuasion amounting to certainty. It must be considered merely as worthy to emerge from the thousand-and-one failures strewed up and down in our books, and to be kept in sight till the challenge *Ἰδε ἡ σοφία ἐστίν* is satisfactorily redeemed.” Alford and all of us would like full demonstration. In this one word there may be more than in his fine description. Strange that the first, suggested through no prepossession, because only to be rejected, befitting the subject as none else can be found to do, or as no one has been able to suggest, nay, as we have said, the actual name whether so intended or not, should not be accepted, only because not demonstrated!

III.

CHAPTER XIV.

*VISION OF THE LAMB ON MOUNT ZION WITH HIS SEALED
AND FAITHFUL FOLLOWERS, OR THE PREDICTED
DOOM OF ANTICHRIST.*

1. *Vers. 1-5.* "And I saw, and behold, the Lamb, standing on the Mount Zion, and with Him a hundred and forty and four thousand, having His name, and the name of His Father, written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and the voice which I heard (was) as (the voice) of harpers harping with their harps: and they sing as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders: And no man could learn the song save the hundred and forty and four thousand, (even) they that had been purchased out of the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These (are) they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were purchased from among men, (to be) the firstfruits unto God and unto the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no lie: they are without blemish."

(1) "*And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on the Mount Zion.*" This vision most fitly follows the visions of the dragon and the two wild beasts, all most deadly and too successful enemies of the Lamb and His faithful followers. We must not forget that the visions referred to are introduced, not only to reveal the predicted rise and reign of Antichrist, but also to set forth that which is implied but not described in the visions of the three woe-trumpets. Under the first woe we found the rise of the beast out of the abyss in the rise of the terrible locust army or agency from the abyss. These two, as rising and as risen, are thus to be identified. They form the beast out of the abyss by which the two witnesses were slain. That beast, then, though not yet described, was in existence long before the death and resurrection of these witnesses, and thus long before the fall of the tenth part of the great city Babylon, of which the beast out of the abyss is the antichristian king. In this way, all the visions of the twelfth and thirteenth chapters belong to a long indefinite period before the point at which we had arrived at the close of the eleventh chapter, and the beginning of the sounding of the last woe-trumpet. Then the Reformation had taken place. A great secession from the persecuting city or Church had taken

place. God had taken His great power, that He might judge and destroy the antichristian kingdom, and, in some high sense, begin afresh His glorious redemptive reign. We called special attention to the fact that the time of judgment was clearly said to have come, not the final judgment of mankind, but what we may call a first grand judgment of the antichristian powers and people, by which the true saints had been so long and so terribly oppressed.

This first paragraph of the fourteenth chapter brings us back to this very point, even the beginning of this special day of judgment, a day which would extend over an indefinite period, including, as we shall find, a longer time than that of the infliction of the seven last plagues, in fact, including all that we find set forth in this chapter. That we are right in thus treating this period as that of the judgment referred to, is clear from the allusion made to it here in verse 7, "Fear God, and give Him glory; for the hour of His judgment is come." In this way we are to regard this appearance of the Lamb on the Mount Zion as taking place after the resurrection of the witnesses, or at the opening of the great Reformation. The beast still reigns. Babylon still flourishes. The end has by no means come; but the beginning of the end has more than arrived. The true Church is rising as if out of her ashes. Mount Zion seems no longer possessed by the enemy. The Lamb, the true Son of David, takes His place within the city of David, and along with Him appear the 144,000 sealed ones, representatives of the true Israel of every age and country. The true David now stands face to face with the real Goliath,—the little Lamb face to face with the terrible wild beast. The war now begins. The coming and glorious victory, as at the sounding of the seventh trumpet, and at the same time, though under a different form, is celebrated in heaven itself "before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders," as if already fully won. The Lamb, with His noble army of martyrs, the army of true Christians, appears as on earth and in the midst of His people, just as He appeared on earth and in the midst of the same people when He was seen by John in the midst of the golden candlesticks. Here, however, He appears as the Commander of the hosts of the living God, whom He is to lead to war with all the antichristian powers. We have been led to give a pretty full exposition of these verses in connection with our interpretation of the two great visions of the seventh chapter, in which we endeavoured to show that the 144,000 sealed ones represented the true Israel from the time of Christ down to the end of the great tribulation, or to the final overthrow of these antichristian powers, and that

the great multitude which no man can number represented these same 144,000 as gathered during the same long period to their heavenly home. Here we have precisely the same two classes: those successively living and following the Lamb on earth, and those successively raised to glory as having ended their days of faithful service on earth.

(2) "*And with Him a hundred and forty and four thousand, having His name, and the name of His Father, written on their foreheads.*" We need not add more with respect to these. They are the sealed ones of chap. vii., who are alluded to in chap. ix. as beyond the power of the agency from the abyss or of the perverted Christian ministry to hurt, just as the same persons are implicitly referred to as having "received the love of the truth," and so not like the others who were "given up to believe a lie," or to be perverted by the working of Satan, or to be corrupted by "the man of sin." They so resemble God and the Lamb as to have their names on their foreheads.

(3) "*And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and the voice which I heard (was) as (the voice) of harpers harping with their harps: and they sing as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders: and no man (no one) could learn the song save the hundred and forty and four thousand, (even) they that had been purchased out of the earth.*" That these are to be identified with the 144,000 viewed as successively raised at death to heaven, is clear from the fact that only the 144,000 could learn the song which they thus sang. This song must thus be learned on earth, if it is to be sung in heaven. It is really, then, the very song of salvation, which all true Christians, all the truly saved on earth, can and do experimentally sing, and which they may be said to sing in the simple and sublime words of chap. i. 5, 6: "Unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by His own blood, and made us a kingdom, priests unto His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever." It is essentially the same mighty cry of the great multitude of chap. vii., "Salvation unto our God, which sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb." The songs are one and the same. The multitudes in heaven are one and the same. All are the many "who come out of the great tribulation, and who washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." In one important sense, both multitude and song are different, as the former are perfectly saved, and as the latter is the song of perfect

salvation. John at once saw the Lamb on Mount Zion and among His faithful followers, and heard the countless harpers harping with their harps and singing their new song before the throne in heaven. We, too, ought to have the same eye to see and the same ear to hear. Just as we are numbered with the 144,000 sealed and faithful followers of the Lamb on earth, singing as well as learning the song of salvation, we shall have eyes to see Jesus crowned with glory and honour, and seated on His throne on the holy hill of Zion, and also ears to hear the very voices of the departed whom we had known as faithful fellow-soldiers here, and who, we are fully assured, have been added to the palm-bearing company of harpers whose voice is sufficiently loud to reach the unsealed ear of every believing, loving spirit here below. We might have argued that the 144,000 must represent all Christians on earth, as none else can learn this song.

(4) "*These are they which were not defiled with women ; for they are virgins. These (are) they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.*" This double description may be used for mutual explanation. Those who are virgins, in the sense here intended, are just those who, with pure and undivided affection, follow the Lamb ; and those who thus follow the Lamb are the undefiled virgin souls spoken of. Alford strangely supposes the difference between married and unmarried life here referred to. Unholy living is here and everywhere severely condemned in Scripture. We cannot doubt, however, that the words here used are to be taken specially, if not exclusively, in a spiritual sense. The corrupt Church is represented as utterly faithless to her husband. Whilst professing to be true and faithful, she is set forth symbolically as if the lowest and most debased in conduct and character. Those here described are pure and loving and devoted to Jesus Christ. Paul shows how desirous he was that all converted through his instrumentality should thus live and act towards their Lord and Master : 2 Cor. xi. 2, "I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I might present you (as) a pure virgin to Christ." These Corinthian Christians may have been guilty of every kind of sin before ; but now Paul would have them devote themselves exclusively and unreservedly to the one husband, that at last he might present them to Christ in all virgin Christian purity and saintliness and love. All this implies that all Christians, expecting to join in the new and everlasting song, should keep at the greatest distance, not from any one special sin, but from all possible sin, and, collectively, forming the one Bride and

Wife of the one Lamb of God, should keep the heart perfectly and constantly disengaged from everything which would prevent it from being the open and free and unreserved abode of Jesus Christ. The words, "These are they who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth," would seem clearly to suppose that these countless harpers were still on earth. However, we find the same company virtually said so to do in the higher world: chap. vii. 17, "The Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall be their Shepherd, and shall lead them unto fountains of waters of life." Still, the words seem more naturally to refer to this life; and the difficulty may be met by a more fit illustration from the same chapter, where it is said, "These are they which come out of the great tribulation,"—not which came: that is, they are of that class whose distinction it is to come or that they come out of that tribulation. So here: "These are of that class of men whose grand characteristic it is to follow the Lamb."

(5) "*These were purchased from among men (to be) the firstfruits unto God and unto the Lamb.*" They are said above to have "been purchased out of the earth." In both cases the same thing is meant. We shall here simply say what we have said already by way of proof that the multitude of chap. vii. and the harpers here spoken of are not only the same, but also made up of all the sealed from the time of Christ to the grand triumph of the gospel over the world—in fact, that they form "the firstfruits" of that great and golden harvest which is to be gathered during the many ages of the promised Millennium. All the actually saved, all the actually raised to heaven during the period of conflict and conquest, are thus most appropriately called "the firstfruits unto God and unto the Lamb." They are so because actually gathered home to God and the Lamb. They are so as, however numerous, not to be equalled in number to those of the universal reign of the Lamb throughout what we presume to think will be the vastly longer period of the Millennial ages,—the time of rich and glorious harvest. This seems finely illustrated by what Jehovah is represented, Jer. ii. 2, 3, as saying concerning Israel: "Thus saith the Lord, I remember for thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals; how thou wentest after Me in the wilderness" (as these followed the Lamb in their wilderness-state), "in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, the firstfruits of His increase." Here those who came out of Egypt and passed through the wilderness, the younger generation of those who were delivered from Egypt, the generation which actually entered the promised land, are called "the firstfruits of the increase" of

Jehovah. The harvest would consist of the many generations which followed. Those who passed through the tribulation of the house of bondage and of the terrible wilderness are fitly called "first-fruits." So here, those saved or "purchased out of the earth or from among men," and led through the great wilderness of trial and conflict, and introduced into the heavenly Canaan, are, in like manner, appropriately called "the firstfruits unto God and the Lamb." The same Israel, then, on earth as the sealed, and in heaven as the saved, seem certainly referred to both here and in chap. vii.

(6) *"And in their mouth was found no lie: they are without blemish."* These words seem to point most certainly to the heavenly state, and to perfect and eternal salvation. How excellent the character of the truly redeemed! How glorious their destiny! Well may all ponder, deeply and often, the one and only path to glory and blessedness, to God and heaven, here simply and sublimely presented to every mind—"These are they who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth."

2. *Vers. 6, 7.* "And I saw another angel flying in mid heaven, having the Everlasting Gospel to proclaim unto them that dwell on the earth, and unto every nation and tribe and tongue and people; and he saith with a great voice, Fear God, and give Him glory: for the hour of His judgment is come; and worship Him that made the heaven and the earth and sea and fountains of waters."

(1) We greatly prefer "the everlasting gospel" to "an eternal gospel." There is but one everlasting or eternal gospel, which, in the Greek, needed no article to determine it. At this special time nothing could be at once more suitable and more sublime than the representation here given of an angel in mid heaven, as if where he might be universally seen and heard, proclaiming that glorious gospel, which the false prophet and false Church had so long concealed, but which was fitted and intended to be a source of eternal good to mankind of all countries and ages. Why the angel should be here called "another angel," when in the preceding context we read of no angel, we cannot conjecture, unless we are thus taught to pass over the twelfth and thirteenth chapters as being, as we have said, parenthetical, and thus to revert to chap. viii. 13, where we find "an angel," or, as is maintained, "an eagle," also "*flying in mid heaven,*" and announcing the woes about to come "on them that dwell on the earth." The fact that both are represented as thus "flying in mid heaven" would fully account for the use of "*another*" as here. The reason for so connecting, or even for so representing

them, seems very simple and clear. The one was appointed to proclaim the fearful woes due to the coming of "the beast from the abyss," or the rise of the antichristian kingdom; whilst the other, in fine contrast, is appointed to announce the renewed proclamation of "the everlasting gospel" due to the reappearance of the Lamb and the partial infliction of the judgment on the antichristian kingdom set forth in chap. xi. 15-19. The first angel in mid heaven thus proclaims the coming woes of antichrist; the second proclaims the returning triumphs of Christ and His glorious gospel. Thus, too, as "angel" is the proper word here, "angel" and not "eagle" must be the proper word in chap. viii. 13. Thus also do we find a close connection indicated between this passage and the closing verses of chap. xi.

Here we may say that the words "them that dwell on the earth" must be taken in the sense in which they have been again and again used, or of those contrasted with true Christians who are said to "dwell in heaven," and therefore of the members of the false Church, from whom the gospel had been long withheld; or we must translate the first *καὶ* not *and*, but *even*, "even unto every tribe," etc., as making up all who dwell on earth. We are thus led to think of our own times and of the comparatively short times now past. We may see, as if the symbol were the object symbolised, the angel of the everlasting gospel in mid heaven proclaiming to all nations the glorious name of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, "The Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," and who now demands the submission of all men to His sceptre and throne on "God's holy hill of Zion." After the Reformation, whilst the gospel was preached all around by those who knew it, ages elapsed before the Reformed Churches rose above the degradation and bondage of centuries, and fully entered into the spirit of the great commission to preach it among all the nations of the earth. This century has been distinguished above all others for the wide diffusion of gospel truth among mankind. We have simply to contemplate the operation of all the evangelical missions to the heathen in order that we may see overhead this angel or missionary from heaven as he is here sublimely set before our eyes.

(2) This may seem opposed by the words ascribed to him, which are, not "Believe in Jesus Christ the Saviour," but "Fear God, and give Him glory; and worship the great Creator." However, the sure way to lead people to do the latter is by leading them to do the former. At the same time, the words are most fit as intended for those deluded by the false prophet, or those of idolatrous and false

religions everywhere, who need to be brought back to the true God, the God of heaven and earth. Viewed as a prediction, and that in its proper place amongst many other closely connected predictions, this sublime vision may be seen, as true to fact and therefore as Divine, by all who contemplate the state and spirit of all evangelical Churches of our own day in relation to the work of converting the whole world to Christ and to God. May all more heartily and more loyally to Christ go on in the glorious work of seeking the eternal salvation of mankind!

3. *Ver.* 8. "And another, a second angel, followed, saying, Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, which hath made all the nations to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."

(1) We have already accounted for the apparently unsuitable use of "another" in the expression "another angel flying in mid heaven," as no other angel had been mentioned in the preceding context, by supposing that the real reference is to the only other agent previously alluded to as "flying in mid heaven," chap. viii. 13, "an angel" according to the Authorised Version, an "eagle" according to the Revised. As there is no doubt as to the use of the word "angel" here, we inferred that "angel" and not "eagle" should be regarded as the proper reading there. If eagle had been the true reading in chap. viii. 13, "another eagle," and not "another angel flying in mid heaven," would have been the correct reading of chap. xiv. 6. All this is confirmed, and the correctness of the use of the "another" in ver. 6 established, by the use of the words "a second," "a third," in the remaining two cases. The whole thus becomes simple: the first "another," because "another flying in mid heaven," and the second "another, a second," because "another angel," but only "a second," not "another, or a third flying in mid heaven," as Alford has supposed. So, again, ver. 9, "and another angel, a third,"—that is, simply "a third angel," and not still "another or fourth angel flying in mid heaven." In a word, three angels are spoken of, the first resembling that of chap. viii. 13, and "flying in mid heaven," and the second and third following in their work the first, but not, like him, "flying in mid heaven."

Be this as it may, we may observe an underlying connection between this and the vision of the everlasting gospel. Whenever and wherever we see the one angel we shall hear the other—that is to say, when the grand mission work expressly commanded by Christ Himself is most heartily and energetically pursued, the fear

of all foes to the true religion will assuredly be little felt, and the assurance of the fall of this and every other Babylon will be possessed and declared.

(2) Here for the first time the name of the great corrupt Church or city is introduced, though we have already found it most truly and impressively described as at once Sodom, Egypt, and persecuting Jerusalem. Here it is described as the faithless wife of the true King; corrupting all nations, herself most corrupt,—just the very city which many take to be the literal seven-hilled city of Rome, but which is here properly named, and is the falsely professing Christian Church associated with the kings of the earth, and, as said, chap. xvii. 18, reigning over them. The fall of Babylon is here expressed most strongly as already past, both by way of expressing the absolute certainty of the coming event, and in order to inspire faith and to give encouragement in the case of all who are yet oppressed by her. A tenth of the great city has already fallen; and this, as a part taken for the whole, may be viewed as warranting, because of the absolute certainty implied, the strong expression here employed—"the wine of the wrath" which her evil conduct brings down on her and on all who partake of it. What is said apparently to take place in an instant may take a very long time to be finally effected.

4. *Vers. 9-11.* "And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a great voice, If any man worshippeth the beast and his image, and receiveth a mark on his forehead, or upon his hand, he also shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is prepared unmixed in the cup of His anger; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and the smoke of their torment goeth up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day and night, they that worship the beast and his image, and whoso receiveth the mark of his name."

(1) Here we find a most terrible warning to those who have yielded to the seductions referred to, or who conform to the practices of the false Church from fear of the consequences of fidelity to the Head of the true, and yet, perhaps, chiefly to those who retain their steadfastness to Him, but are exposed to all the terrors and temptations which have constrained the others to yield. All are told that, call themselves by the name of Christ as they may, and think that they belong to His redeemed people as they will, they shall be treated according to their real character, even that of the guilty and unconverted world, from which they may profess to have come out. This warning is really a further announcement of the judgment of

chap. xi. 18, and of ver. 6 above—not the final and universal, but this special and yet fearful one connected with the reign of the beast. By it the doom of Antichrist and all his deluded and persistent subjects is sealed. All who tamper with antichristian error and practice are warned of their awful danger, the danger of being dealt with as the finally impenitent at the great day of universal judgment.

(2) The words are most terrible. Too readily do we suppose that such words are hyperbolical. In Scripture, even in the words of Jesus Himself, the destiny of the wicked is described in a way fitted to strike terror into every mind. Here faithlessness to Christ is treated as the most terrible of all sins, and thus as worthy of the most terrible of all punishments. The destiny of the faithful is represented in the vision of the heavenly harpers as the greatest possible contrast, even that of eternal blessedness and glory in the presence of God and of the Lamb and of all the angels of light. All their endless employments are set forth under the beautiful and expressive figure of singing the new and wondrous song of salvation, a song which these faithless ones cannot possibly learn, or which none but the truly saved, represented by the 144,000 sealed and faithful followers of the Lamb, can learn or sing.

5. *Vers. 12, 13.* "Here is the patience of the saints, they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; for their works follow with them."

In chap. xiii. 10 we have "Here is the patience and the faith of the saints" introduced immediately after the description is given of the beast, his war with the saints and his rule over all peoples, as if to point out the grand work which, in such a season of long continued trial and danger, Christ would appoint for His followers. They were to be brought to a severe test; and they might be assured of the highest glory and richest blessedness if they stood it. Here we have the same encouragement given to those who "keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus,"—fine description of the true saints of every age and country. Then their blessedness, when they leave the scene of trial and danger, whether by a natural or a violent death, is most touchingly disclosed, and that by a voice from heaven, the abode of the departed true and faithful of all times, the abode of the countless harpers who have all come from the ranks of the noble army of the 144,000, the abode of the "great

multitude who come out of the great tribulation and who washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." — "Blessed are all those who die in the Lord!" They have lived in the Lord; and now they die in the Lord, and so they go to be for ever with Him, to share in His blessedness and glory for ever and ever. "*From henceforth*,"—what does that mean? Various ideas have been suggested. We know not of any to be preferred to that which, keeping in view the trying and long-continued period, which would so strongly test the patience of the saints, would regard the death of all true saints as peculiarly blessed. It would be a rest from real toil and anxiety, a rest from persecution and manifold suffering, a rest from temptation of every kind to forsake the Lord and to enter the service of the antichristian king. Nor would they be unrewarded for all their hard and patient and faithful service. "Their works would follow with them." The works of the worldly, the treasures of the godless, the results of their genius and industry, with all the pleasures of sin, must be left behind. Only the truly good can lay up a treasure in heaven to which they can go, and which they can fully enjoy, when they leave this present scene. "Blessed," too, are all at any time, but especially in such times of strong temptation, who do not yield to temptation, who do not fall away, who "fight the good fight of faith," who are "faithful unto death," who continue so to live as to "die in the Lord." Most precious words! How many a desponding spirit have they cheered! How many a sorrowful heart have they comforted! How many a struggling one have they inspired! How many a dying one have they filled with hope and joy!

6. *Vers. 14-16.* "And I saw, and behold, a white cloud: and on the cloud I (saw) one sitting like unto a son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a great voice to him that sat on the cloud, Send forth thy sickle, and reap: for the hour to reap is come; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud cast his sickle upon the earth; and the earth was reaped."

This and the vision which follows evidently symbolise the judgment spoken of in this and in the eleventh chapter. Both would, like all the visions of this Book, at first sight lead us to think of some great work as done in a very short time, and done from beginning to end without interruption. The more closely these visions are studied along with the real nature of the objects symbolised, they are seen to require us to make ample provision in point of time for their fulfilment. As in the case of geological

investigation, we are apt to carry our small ideas to the work of measuring era after era, and so to conclude that all has been effected within a period of a few thousands of years; and, as we advance, we become gradually persuaded that these thousands must be inconceivably increased, and that natural causation, however mighty, moves vastly more slowly than any mind would naturally imagine. So with the visions of prophecy and of this Book. "He cast his sickle upon the earth; and the earth was reaped," would lead one to think of the work of a moment, and not, as may actually be the case, of years, or even of generations;—"Let there be light; and there was light," also as the work of an instant, yet the work of many a millennium. This peculiar judgment of the earth is here and thus symbolised. The whole is general—no details are suggested. The men of the earth had been allowed to take their own course, even in contemning the gospel of their own salvation and in joining in opposing and persecuting the Israel of God. Their time has now come. They must suffer. They must be checked in their evil courses. They must lose their power; their resources must fail them; and they, like all who persist in impenitence, must perish at last. This would seem to be meant by this peculiar harvest. The antichristian nations would seem referred to. Yet the question arises, Do the harvest and vintage relate to the same class or classes of men? In both cases, are the wicked and the wicked alone intended? May not true Christians be meant in the former, and the corrupt Church in the latter? Not a little may be said in support of either.

Alford has put the matter exceedingly well; and may help towards a satisfactory conclusion:—"The verdict of commentators is very much divided. There are circumstances in the context which tell both ways. The parallelism with the vintage, which follows, seems to favour a harvest of the wicked; but then, on the other hand, if so, what is the distinction between the two ingatherings? and why do we read of the casting into the winepress of God's wrath in the second case, and of no corresponding feature in the other? Again, why is the agency so different—the Son of man on the white cloud with the golden crown in the one case, the mere angel in the other? Besides, the two gatherings seem quite distinct. The former is over before the latter begins. On the whole, then, though I would not pronounce decidedly, I must incline to think that the harvest is the ingathering of the saints, God's harvest, reaped from the earth: described here thus generally, before the vintage of wrath follows. And thus we have at least

these two visions in harmony with the character of this section, which contains the mingled agency and fortunes of the Church and of its enemies; thus this harmony answers to the great preaching of the everlasting gospel above, vers. 6, 7, while the following vintage fulfils the denunciations of wrath on those who worship the image or receive the mark of the beast. And thus, too, we bring this description into harmony with our Lord's important parable in Mark iv. 29, where the very words are used of the agency of Christ Himself when the work of grace is ripe, whether in the individual or in the Church. But while thus inclined, I will not deny that the other view, and that which unites both, have very much to be said for them." All this is very admirable. If it had been written by another, the excellent and cautious author might have pronounced it faultless and conclusive. And yet we are fully persuaded he has missed the exact reference of this vision. By his interpretation of verses 6 and 7 of the preaching of the gospel generally, supported, as he supposes it to be, by the words of Christ, Matt. xxiv. 14, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations; and then shall the end come," he shows that he regards the ingathering of all Christians as here set forth. This, we are assured, is a great mistake.

The persons called upon to "fear God, and give Him glory," as the result of accepting "the everlasting gospel," are urged to do so, because "the hour of His judgment is come." This judgment is that of the antichristian peoples, not the universal and final. Though the gospel is to be preached to all nations without exception, there seems to be at least a special, we would not say an exclusive, reference to the nations about to be judged. Whilst other nations may enjoy the same blessing, a fresh and final opportunity seems here to be granted to those who have been denied the privilege of hearing the pure and simple gospel, that they might be saved. There thus seems to be more in what we said of the mode of expression than may have appeared—namely, that in the words "to them that dwell on the earth, and unto every nation and tribe and tongue and people," the first *καί* should be rendered not *and*, but *even*, "even unto every tribe," etc., thus suggesting all mankind throughout the world; or the first clause, "them that dwell on the earth," must be taken in the special sense in which we find it again and again employed of those contrasted with true Christians who are said to dwell in heaven. If we retain *and*, then we seem to have a reference, *first* to the antichristian peoples, or "them that

dwell on the earth," or the earthly, and *next* to all other nations and tribes of mankind.

This would harmonise with plain matter of fact—that, at the time referred to, the gospel began to be preached anew to the human race, and yet that it was in the first instance, and specially, presented by the restored witnesses to all around them, even those within the corrupt and persecuting Church. Besides, dispersed among the antichristian peoples about to be judicially dealt with, there were like the 7000 faithful ones mingled with the apostate Israelites in the days of Elijah, an unknown number of genuine Christians. This is afterwards clearly indicated by "the voice from heaven, saying," with regard to Babylon, "Come forth, My people, out of her, that ye have no fellowship with her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." We take, then, the harvest of the earth to be the ingathering of the saints mingled with these perverted Christians or "them that dwell on the earth." Till these were gathered in, the vintage of the earth could not be gathered. Lot must escape before Sodom is destroyed. Christians must escape before Jerusalem is destroyed. All seems thus to become simple and harmonious. The Son of man, the King of Zion, with His golden crown of royalty, comes first, claims His own, separates them from His and their enemies, whether by death or by effectually calling them out of the Babylon which is about to be destroyed; and then follows the real judgment, the vintage of wrath. "The Son of man" thus appears in proper time and in real character. The angel who calls on Him to reap, simply announces the will of God, and no superiority is or could have been implied. His coming in a cloud is in keeping with His own words in the Gospels. He thus came to seal the doom of impenitent Jerusalem. He may be said thus to come whenever He comes in majesty or to act the part of a judge or king.

7. *Vers.* 17-20. "And another angel came out from the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, he that hath power over fire; and he called with a great voice to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Send forth thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel cast his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vintage of the earth, and cast it into the winepress, the great (winepress) of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and there came out blood from the winepress, even unto the bridles of the horses, as far as a thousand and six hundred furlongs."

(1) The harvest of the good has been reaped. The vintage of

the wicked now follows. True Christians have been gathered from among the false. The great enemy of Christ and His saints is now judged, and is about to suffer. The true Church is the true vine. The perverted Church is the strange vine. Under the figure of such a vine, or "the vine of the earth," that Church is now to be judicially dealt with. This figure we find again and again in Old Testament scripture. In Isaiah v. 1-7 the house of Israel is compared to the vineyard of the Lord of hosts, who is said to have "planted it with the choicest vine," and to have done all that could be done for it, and yet to have been so disappointed as to have to ask, "Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" The vine of Jesus Christ had, in like manner, failed to yield the proper fruit. Again, Isaiah lxiii. 1-3 strikingly illustrates this vision of judicial indignation: "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in His apparel, marching in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art Thou red in Thine apparel, and Thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine fat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the peoples there was no man with Me: yea, I trod them in Mine anger, and trampled them in My fury; and their life-blood is sprinkled upon My garments, and I have stained all My raiment. For the day of vengeance was in Mine heart, and the year of My redeemed is come." Our vision is to no small extent a reproduction of this, which is also referred to in chap. xix. 15, "And He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God." In this vision of judgment, no one is expressly said to tread this great winepress; but we are told that it was trodden without the city. The words just quoted suggest by whom, especially when taken in connection with what is said in the same chapter as to the great Warrior on the white horse, who is also said to fight a great and final battle with the armies of the false king and false prophet—in fact, under another figure, to do what is meant by treading this very winepress. The identity of the two is very clear. The very reference to the blood being "even unto the bridles of the horses," not naturally connected with a winepress, but most naturally with a great battle, of itself suggests the identity of the two. In the parable of the tares Christ tells us of the angels, in the end of the world, gathering out of His kingdom all things that offend and them that do iniquity. Here the perverted kingdom of Christ has become so great, and the true subjects of Christ within it have become so few, that the Son of man is represented as gathering them out of

that kingdom, and the angels are commissioned to destroy it. Thus far may this first great judgment be contrasted with the last and greatest.

(2) All this seems clearly to prove the correctness of the view taken of the preceding vision of the harvest. In that of the vintage, we have most assuredly one of the judgment of the corrupt anti-christian Church. The fruit of this now strange vine, the grapes of iniquity, can no longer be tolerated. That fruit is fully ripe, ripe for destruction. The vine does more than merely cumber the soil. Without a figure this vision has to do with the greatest enemy of Christ and His people, the enemy by whom His saints have been persecuted and crushed for many ages. By the angel of the everlasting gospel a final opportunity for repentance may be said to have been granted. The Divine patience has become exhausted. The day of awful retribution has come. The enemy is still bent upon evil. The saints must be released. The great battle must be fought. The great winepress must be trodden. Not till the iniquity of the Canaanites was full could they be destroyed. Not till the Jews had finally rejected Christ, and become the bitterest foes of His Church, could Jerusalem fall and the natives be dispersed. And not till the grapes were fully ripe could this vine be utterly rooted out. The details are very striking. An angel comes out of the temple in heaven with a sharp sickle, commissioned to execute the decree of God. His commission is declared by another angel, who came out from the altar, where were the souls of the martyrs, whose number has now been completed by the persecutions of this deadly foe, and whence this angel is said to come in token of the vengeance about to be executed. He has power over fire, the fire from the altar, which, in answer to the prayers of the suffering saints, he was before said to cast down to the earth. This judgment, then, is in answer to the sighs and cries and tears and groans of hundreds of years. The sickle is used. The grapes are cast into the great winepress of Divine indignation, and there trodden, we are told, "without the city." Instead of the juice of the grape there came forth the blood of men, a very river of blood, "even unto the bridles of the horses as far as 1600 furlongs." We have said this allusion to horses implies that a great battle was fought, and that the enemy were not only very numerous, but completely destroyed. The words, of course, are hyperbolical in the highest degree. The battle implied is fully set forth in chap. xix. 17-21; the leader on the one side being the Rider on the white horse, who is expressly said to rule the nations with a rod of iron,

and to tread this very "winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God," and who, followed by the armies of heaven, His own true and faithful soldiers, is declared to overthrow the kings, the captains, the mighty men, the free and the bond, the small and the great, even all who are under the rule of the beast and the false prophet, the antichristian king and ministry described in the thirteenth and seventeenth chapters.

The treading of the winepress, or the great battle, takes place "without the city," the city previously spoken of as destined to fall and perish, even Babylon, the capital of the beast or false king, the king of the corrupt Church, as Jerusalem is the capital of Christ, the true and now victorious King of the Israel of God; and, as the latter is no material city, the former is neither literal Rome nor literal Jerusalem, nor any literal city whatever. That city is not yet taken or destroyed. The war is outside, or simply in defence of the mystic capital. The battle is disastrous and fatal. In due time the city shall be utterly destroyed. This whole judgment is identical with that under the last woe-trumpet of chap. xi. 17, 18, and extends to this fall of the guilty city, and so includes the last woe itself, as described in chap. xv. and xvi. under the figures of the seven bowls with the seven last plagues, or with the very wrath of God here spoken of. Extending thus over so long a time, the symbolical representation is in one sense by no means hyperbolical—that is, if the wars, the sufferings, the bloodshed of ages, are to be exhibited under one symbol, and as if during a very short time, nothing but the very greatest apparent exaggeration can possibly suggest even the lowest idea of the reality. This whole chapter is not only true to historical fact, but, from beginning to end, fitted to set forth Christ and all the real and triumphant antagonism to the antichristian kingdom, as well as to give all comfort to the terribly persecuted and afflicted saints of many generations.

VII.

CHAPTERS XV., XVI., XVII.

WE group these three chapters together as all relating to one and the same subject. The last three were in like manner closely connected with one another. We treated them as really parenthetical, but not on that account as of inferior importance. They are, in fact, most important, viewed as setting forth the real enemies of Christ and His people, the grand apostasy described by the apostle Paul. The last chapter was greatly needed in order to reveal Christ as the great and true Antagonist of the "man of sin," whose destiny had to be revealed in order to the encouragement of the long persecuted and well-nigh fainting Church. We pointed out the connection of the vision of the vintage with that of the great battle of the nineteenth chapter. And now we may add that it really includes all the visions of the next two chapters relating to the plagues and to the destruction of the antichristian powers. These two chapters are thus closely connected with the last verses of the eleventh chapter, and may be treated as if the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth had not intervened. The first and second woes fell on those who dwell on the earth, those who did not "receive the love of the truth that they might be saved," through the perversion of the Christian ministry, the loss of the true gospel of Christ, and all the evils which attended the rise of "the beast out of the abyss," or of the antichristian powers. The third and last woe falls on the same dwellers on the earth, or those who refuse the great salvation, through all the terrible evils connected with the judicial treatment of the man of sin, or the pouring out of these bowls containing the last plagues in which "is finished the wrath of God." The seventeenth chapter is supplementary, but most important, giving a complete symbolic description of the character and reign of "the beast out of the abyss," of which we have but a partial exhibition under the figure of the beast from the sea with the fatally wounded head which

Satan restored to life. The great importance of every one chapter, or of every one vision, in order to the satisfactory interpretation of all the others, cannot fail to appear in proportion as that interpretation continuously advances.

I.

CHAPTER XV.

*A VISION OF THE SEVEN ANGELS WITH THE SEVEN
PLAGUES, OR ANTICIPATED TRIUMPH OVER THE
ANTICHRISTIAN KINGDOM.*

1. *Vers. 1-4.* "And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having seven plagues, (which are) the last, for in them is finished the wrath of God. And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire; and them that come victorious from the beast, and from his image, and from the number of his name, standing by the sea of glass, having harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are Thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty; righteous and true are Thy ways, Thou King of the nations. Who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only art holy; for all the nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy righteous acts have been made manifest."

(1) "*And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having seven plagues, (which are) the last, for in them is finished the wrath of God.*" These words may be connected with chap. xi. 19, in which, after the celebration of the first great triumph over the antichristian kingdom, and after the declaration of the arrival of "the time of the dead to be judged, and (the time) to give the reward to the prophets and saints," we find it said, that "there was opened the temple of God that is in heaven: and there was seen in His temple the ark of His covenant; and there followed lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail." After so long a reign of darkness and of the antichristian king, so marvellous an era had been ushered in, and God had so evidently taken to Himself His great redemptive power, that almost a new Christian dispensation might be said to have begun—certainly a time of renewed war with the powers of evil had commenced; and so the temple with its covenant of grace appears once more, or as if opened for the first time. Then followed lightning, and thunders,

which betoken the indignation of God and His determination to put down opposition of one form or another. Here, He proposes to go on with the war against the corrupt and persecuting kingdom of the beast; and in so doing He completes the work of the third woe-trumpet, and, as we now find, chap. xv. 5, 6, out of this very temple thus opened "there came out the seven angels which had the seven plagues." The connection between this and the close of chap. xi. is thus clear and certain. Further, we are to remember that, before the temple was thus opened, a great but indefinite number had escaped from the kingdom of the beast, and were now rejoicing in the freedom and the glory of the revived kingdom of Jesus Christ; and hence the part assigned to such in the opening of this section of this Book. John saw a great and marvellous sign in heaven, one in some way resembling that of chap. xii., setting forth the great and marvellous judgment and overthrow of the professing friends, but most cruel and deadly foes of the kingdom of God. These seven angels with the seven plagues might well make the profoundest impression on the mind of John. The plagues are called the last, because in them is finished the wrath of God, and yet not without suggesting that there had been other plagues which might be called the first, or those in which the same wrath was revealed. Though God is the God of boundless mercy, He cannot and could not be the Ruler of the world without dealing severely with those who trample under foot all the rights and privileges of others. Accordingly, these angels are about to execute the necessary and righteous judgment of God.

(2) "*And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire; and them that come victorious from the beast, and from his image, and from the number of his name, standing by (or, upon) the sea of glass, having harps of God.*" The parallel is evidently drawn here between the escape of the true Israel from the yoke of Antichrist and that of ancient typical Israel from the bondage of Egypt. Hence, too, the parallel of the plagues. This gives the key to what follows. "The sea of glass mingled with fire" corresponds to the Red Sea, with the great deliverance on the one hand and the terrible overthrow on the other. Strangely, some have mistaken this for the sea of glass before the throne, or the brilliant pavement of heaven. The fire here evidently refers to the destruction of the hosts of Pharaoh. This new Pharaoh is to experience a like fatal defeat. This redeemed Israel of God exult with joy, and praise the Source of their great deliverance. Therefore have they in their hands "the harps of God." Thus far they resemble those of the 144,000 who have

crossed the flood and stand on the unseen shore "harping with their harps," the very "harps of God." They triumph over the beast, whose despotism, spiritual, personal and political, had as iron entered their soul and long crushed them to the very dust. They have at least escaped His seductions, temptations, terrors. They triumph over his image, even all worship of him and obedience to him, as they have remained steadfast in the faith and service of Jesus Christ. They triumph over the number of his name, which seems to point to his essentially godless and worldly spirit and character; resisting the manifold temptations to conformity to his kingdom through the many threatened consequences of resisting his unrighteous claims. How much they had to resist and to endure, only experience could reveal. The time referred to appears to be that of the opening Reformation; only we must suppose no short period, as that of the triumph on the shore of the Red Sea, or even as the words might of themselves suggest. The harps of God are yet employed. The song is yet sung, and the time of grateful and joyful exultation is by no means yet ended.

(3) "*And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are Thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty; righteous and true are Thy ways, Thou King of the nations.*" The conquerors of any one time, or the true Israel of any one time, identify themselves with those of every time. All the mighty acts of Jehovah, faithfully recorded in Scripture, or in any way known to His people, are celebrated in song through all the ages. They all form an ever increasing revelation of His character, His attributes, and His purposes. Two songs are said to be sung; and yet they are but one, the one song of deliverance and of salvation carried on from age to age, to the glory of the same redeeming God and for the good of the same redeemed people. How exalted Moses, the servant of God, to be thus, and from generation to generation, associated in name and in song with the Lamb of God, the Saviour of the world! This song rises from the two great deliverances, to all the great and mighty acts of Him who is of boundless glory and grace. His ways as well as His works are here extolled. How pure and full of light the mind which can really see the perfect excellency of the works and ways of God! We have long delighted in the name given to Him in our Authorised Version, "Thou King of saints," and feel as if we had met with a very sensible loss when led to accept the change, whether into "King of the ages" or, "King of nations," which is favoured by Jer. x, 7, even though the former may serve to keep up the

delightful thought of God as binding all past and all future ages as one great and precious chain of Divine and eternal life, and though the latter may serve to keep up the like delightful thought of God as the one great and living bond between all the children of men of every race and land.

(4) "*Who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only art holy; for all the nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy righteous acts have been made manifest.*" Those who have experienced the saving power of Jehovah, and who have learned to love and revere His glorious and gracious name, wonder greatly that all men are not like themselves, or that any can possibly fail to fear and glorify Him. They exclaim, "Who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify Thy name?" How different the spirit of those who thus fear and glorify from that of the many who see no beauty or glory or majesty in God, and no revelation of His great name in the mightiest of His works or the most merciful of His ways! Thou only art holy." How true! How profound! How sublime! Well may all listen to the words, as if literally heard as coming from the central throne, "Be ye holy; for I am holy." How delightful the prophetic words, "All the nations shall come and worship before Thee"! How many have come since these words were uttered! How glorious the very conception of such a future! Who would not long and work and pray for its full realisation? Happy all who so come and worship! Happy the parents who are blessed to lead their children to come and worship! Happy the most obscure of the saints of God who are enabled to lead some wandering spirits so to come! Happy the preachers of the gospel, whether in their own country or in distant lands, who carry on the great work of leading all the nations of the earth to come and worship this great God and Redeemer of men! "Thy righteous acts have been made manifest." How glorious all the perfections of the eternal God! How glorious His holiness, His righteousness, His grace, His mercy! How vast our debt to the Sacred Scriptures for making manifest to us His righteous acts, and through these Himself! The self-revelation of Jehovah, His self-manifestation in Jesus Christ and His kingdom, how transcendently excellent and precious! What is man without the knowledge and love of God? How noble and excellent, when full of both, and when renewed in the image and glory of the great Creator!

2. *Vers. 5-8.* "And after these things I saw, and the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: and there came out from the temple the seven angels that had the seven plagues, clothed in

pure and bright linen, and girt about their breasts with golden girdles. And one of the four living creatures gave unto the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from His power, and none was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels should be finished."

(1) "*And after these things I saw, and the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: and there came out from the temple the seven angels that had the seven plagues, clothed in pure and bright linen, and girt about their breasts with golden girdles.*" As already said, this opening of the temple, the same as that of chap. xi. 19, suggests a special time of Divine manifestation, a new step in the progress of the Church out of the darkness of a concealed gospel or obscured testimony. In coming out of the inner temple, these angels of judgment came out from the immediate presence of God, or with a great commission from the very throne. "Arrayed with precious stone." So the Revised Version. It seems most strange, to say no more; the more so, as "precious" has to be prefixed to make the expression somewhat more tolerable. Alford retains the Authorised: "*clad in linen* (the remarkable reading, *λίθον*, can hardly be genuine, though strongly attested. There is a precedent for *λίθον ἐνδεδυμένοι* in Ezek. xxviii. 13)." The fact that the same adjectives are used of the fine linen in chap. xix. 8 seems greatly to favour the Authorised reading here. The words are so like, that a clerical error can easily be accounted for. The illustration from Ezek. xxviii. 13 is not so striking as Alford's words suggest. "*Girt about the breasts with golden girdles.*" The entire description reveals peculiar dignity and sacredness. Their appointed work was most terrible.

(2) "*And one of the four living creatures gave unto the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from His power; and none was able to enter into the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels should be finished.*" We have regarded the four living creatures as of highest rank, and representatives of the unfallen world, the cherubim and seraphim of Old Testament Scriptures, sometimes, as here, angels of judgment, though for the most part angels of mercy. One of them is most fitly employed in conveying to the seven angels these emblems of judgment. When he did so, the temple, we are told, "was filled with smoke," another emblem of the righteous and most awful indignation of God. How terrible the thought of any such thing coming from the very glory and power of the God of mercy

and grace! None can stand before Him when He is angry. The glory of His righteousness thus appears in the doom of the impenitent, who, as in this case, have long persecuted and destroyed His own people. How awful this representation of judgment! How awful the very glory of God! How bright and beautiful His smile! How dark and dreadful His frown! Whilst the smoke of the Divine wrath continued, no one could enter the temple. These golden bowls must first be emptied. The judgment was final and irreversible, as well as most terrible. Possibly this is at least so far meant by these closing words, as if they implied that no intercession need be made, no prayer offered, in behalf of the doomed impenitent enemies of Christ and His people; that the day of salvation could not really come to the latter unless as a day of vengeance to the former. Here, again, we have one of the greatest of mysteries—the mystery of the only possible Divine treatment of sin and of impenitent sinners in its manifold relation to salvation and to those who receive it. Well does it become all men, without exception, to “stand in awe and sin not,” to remember the glory as well as the grace of the Most High!

II.

CHAPTER XVI.

VISION OF THE SEVEN BOWLS OR VIALS OF WRATH, OR PUNISHMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF ANTICHRIST.

1. *Vers.* 1, 2. “And I heard a great voice out of the temple, saying to the seven angels, Go ye, and pour out the seven bowls of the wrath of God into the earth. And the first went, and poured out his bowl into the earth; and it became a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and which worshipped his image.”

As none could at this time enter the temple, the great voice would seem to come from God Himself, as if He gave a direct command. In obedience to this “*the first went and poured out his bowl into the earth.*” This corresponds to the vision of the first trumpet, in which we have considered the Pagan Roman Empire as referred to. From what we have already been led to infer from these last chapters, and especially from the vision of the vintage and winepress, we must now regard the Papal Roman Empire, the mystic kingdom of the beast, as here intended. As is suggested by “the conquerors from the beast” standing on the shore of the sea of glass mingled

with fire, and singing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb, that kingdom is here contemplated under the figure of Egypt, the house of bondage, from which these conquerors have made their triumphant escape. It might seem more natural for Babylon to have been here symbolically used. However, as Babylon is otherwise employed as the great mystic capital soon to be taken and destroyed, Egypt was more fitly referred to. "The earth" on which this first bowl was emptied is not the earth in general, or the whole world, but the land of the mystic kingdom, as distinguished from the sea belonging to the same kingdom. This we take to be the case, whether we can regard the idea of Egypt being kept up throughout or not.

"A noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and which worshipped his image." Here we have a marked allusion to one of the plagues of Egypt: Exod. ix. 8-11, "And the Lord said unto Moses and unto Aaron, Take you handfuls of ashes of the furnace, and let Moses sprinkle it toward the heaven in the sight of Pharaoh. . . . And it became a boil breaking forth with blains upon man and upon beast. And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boils were upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians." Here the people of this mystic Egypt suffer in some similar manner,—even all who serve and worship the antichristian king. The exact time and nature of this general infliction we may not know. As the two witnesses are said to have tormented those who dwell on the earth, we may not be far wrong in supposing that the witnesses when raised from the dead, the preachers of the true gospel when restored, would, by their very doctrine, cause like pain and torture. Many other causes may have been at work, and we may say are now at work, involving those who reject Christ and follow Antichrist in all kinds of intellectual, moral, social, and religious unrest and uneasiness, discontent and the like. From the opening of the Reformation to the present day the evils here alluded to have been more or less endured by the many peoples referred to.

Elliott says, "I explain it, in common with other interpreters, to prefigure that tremendous outbreak of social and moral evil, of democratic fury, atheism, and vice, which was speedily seen to characterise the French Revolution: that of which the ultimate source was in the long and deep-seated corruption and irreligion of the nation,—that which from France as a centre spread like a plague, through its affiliated societies, to the other countries of Papal Christendom; and was, wheresoever its poison was imbibed,

as much the punishment as the symptom of the corruption within." All this is true and good ; but this bowl was poured out long before the French Revolution, as the connection of these plagues with the third woe-trumpet shows. The horrors of the French Revolution may be fairly placed among the evils here intended, as a part, but by no means as the whole. The state of Europe ever since the opening of the Reformation is too true and sad a fulfilment of the mystic sore here spoken of. Nor is that sore likely to be soon healed, or to be healed at all, till the true religion of Christ and the New Testament takes the place of the perverted and corrupt religion which has for so many ages vexed and perplexed, darkened and oppressed the minds and hearts of men.

2. *Ver.* 3. "And the second poured out his bowl into the sea ; and it became blood as of a dead man ; and every living soul died, (even) the things that were in the sea."

As in the case of the trumpets, the second follows the first, not in the order of time, but simply in the order of representation. Land and sea make up a country. That the whole may, both must, suffer ; and they naturally suffer together. Under the second trumpet, as here, the water is said to be turned into blood. So, too, in the case of the waters of the Nile and the plagues of Egypt. The language, of course, is highly figurative, or rather purely symbolic. Some most deadly evil or evils must be meant. The principle of symbolic representation hinted at in reference to the seemingly most hyperbolic statement as to the enormous stream of human blood—namely, that, when something, it may be very awful, is spread over a long period of time, the language of exaggeration must be used if a vivid idea is to be conveyed, and if that idea is to come up to aught approaching the truth, may be here applied. The whole sea is said to have become blood, and all things in it died : words which can with any sobriety be interpreted only of some long-continued evil, comparatively small viewed as existing from day to day or from year to year, but absolutely enormous viewed as endured for ages by many peoples. Some would take this plague in a spiritual sense. We seem rather to be here informed of all kinds of personal and political agitation and controversy, leading to many wars and much bloodshed. But whether it was intended that we would attach any really definite idea to the representation, we are not prepared to say. That it may have been meant by this plague that many wars and much bloodshed would distinguish the period between the first and the final blow dealt to the kingdoms of Antichrist, we may easily

believe. The land shall be covered with many a grievous sore, and the sea filled as it were with blood, are expressions which might be used to announce figuratively all that is meant by these two plagues, and which we might be left to interpret, with quite sufficient definiteness, of all the evils, spiritual and temporal, to be inflicted on the antichristian world at large, and during the times alluded to. We think it wiser and better to take such a general view, which may be fully sustained, and cannot be contradicted, by the history of Europe, than to conjecture, or to insist upon, anything more definite, but less certain. We sometimes speak of a sea of blood, or of oceans of blood, and are sufficiently well understood. Let us, then, be content to know that these two plagues set before our minds the terrible sufferings of those who persist in personal or political adherence to the corrupt Church here condemned.

3. *Vers. 4-7.* "And the third poured out his bowl into the rivers and the fountains of the waters; and it became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters saying, Righteous art Thou, which art and which wast, Thou Holy One, because Thou didst thus judge: for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and blood hast Thou given them to drink: they are worthy. And I heard the altar saying, Yea, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments."

Under the third trumpet, the rivers and fountains are said to have been turned into wormwood. Here they are said to be turned into blood. It would seem hard to distinguish between the two plagues. Blood is said to be the result in both cases. However, the difference is vast between the sea and these rivers and fountains, which are specially regarded here as sources of life, possibly the main resources of a country. These, instead of subserving their proper ends, are declared to be of loathsome and deadly influence. How fearful the idea of having blood to drink! These persecuting followers of the false prophet had delighted in the death of the true prophets of Jesus Christ. These proud subjects of the false king had delighted in the death of the saints and subjects of the true Saviour-King. Now the times have changed: the day of just judgment has arrived. The true and faithful martyrs must be vindicated; the false and faithless persecutors must be condemned. For ages all this has come to pass. Within papal lands, and through all these ages, life has been insecure, multitudes have fallen in battle, thousands have perished by the hands of assassins. How have the mighty fallen! Spain rejected the gospel, Spain especially maintained that awful hell of cruelty, of murder, of fiendish persecution, the Inquisition:

and how long has Spain, from being the mightiest, been the meanest of the kingdoms of Europe! France rejected the gospel, and banished and murdered the saints of God, France had her St. Bartholomew's Day of Protestant carnage and destruction; and history tells the striking tale of the fulfilment of the awful words here used, even to the very letter—"They poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and blood hast Thou given them to drink." But, whilst pointing to such illustrations, we are not disposed to particularise. The whole history of the last three centuries is a perfect commentary on the three announcements of coming evil here given.

"*The angel of the waters*" appears simply to represent the Divine agency in its relation to the mystic waters, or to the things mystically intended by these rivers and fountains, or, as we have suggested, the manifold resources of human life. He speaks in harmony with the truth of things, and declares the perfect righteousness of the great Eternal One in thus fearfully dealing with those who had so fearfully dealt with the holiest and best of mankind. He declares the condemned worthy of their terrible condemnation. The altar itself, or a voice from it, is heard saying, "Yea, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments." From the same altar of sacrifice, under which the souls of the martyrs of Jesus were represented as being, had risen the cry, "How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? . . . And it was said to them, that they should rest yet for a little time, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, which should be killed even as they were, should be fulfilled." Now the latter class have suffered. The cry has been heard. The judgment has come. Its justice is acknowledged. The martyrs of Rome Pagan, joined by the martyrs of Rome Papal, from the very altar now exclaim, "Yea, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments."

4. *Vers.* 8, 9. "And the fourth poured out his bowl upon the sun; and it was given unto it to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat; and they blasphemed the name of God which hath the power over these plagues; and they repented not to give Him glory."

Here again the correspondence may be traced between this bowl and the fourth trumpet. In the latter the Imperial government was shorn of its power and glory, and so reduced as to be prepared for coming extinction. Now, the sun spoken of is the sun of the anti-

christian system. It is not said to give forth light or to promote life. It sends forth a pernicious, scorching heat. The doctrines of the Church or the pretensions of the ruling power are felt to be grievous. As said, men are rather scorched by the heat than cheered and illuminated by the sun of the system. The exact nature of this plague we may not be able to define. Not impossibly, the people were so affected by the infusion of new thought, or by the alteration of circumstances, that what they easily endured or even deemed profitable before, they felt to be wrong now and no longer endurable. The altered states of both ministry and people may have combined to lead to this result. If, instead of the religious, we regard the political sun as here alluded to, then we might easily find abundant illustrations of the papal governments thus scorching the papal peoples. However, not one imperial power appears so great as well to be symbolised by the sun. The fire would thus seem to be spiritual, and of such a nature or having such an effect that the men who experienced its influence ought to have seen that it was permitted or intended to lead them to repentance. All failed. As, in the case of the plagues of Egypt, the hearts of king and people were hardened, so, in the case of these, men still stoutly resisted, "and they blasphemed the name of God, which hath the power over these plagues; and they repented not to give Him glory." The whole Divine judicial treatment of the antichristian kingdom failed to awaken right thought and feeling towards God and with respect to their own sinful courses; and so, when plague has succeeded plague, final destruction, like that which overtook Pharaoh and his army, must follow.

5. *Vers. 10, 11.* "And the fifth poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast; and his kingdom was darkened; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they repented not of their works."

The marked correspondence between this and the fifth trumpet fully confirms the view taken of the latter as setting forth the rise of the beast out of the abyss. Here the plague falls upon the throne of the same beast, and clearly points to his fall and the fall of his whole kingdom. In deciphering this symbol we seem to be at no loss to find out either the proper interpretation or the most abundant fulfilment. The antichristian throne has suffered immensely, and that from time to time. His kingdom no longer appears the very kingdom of God and of Christ, as it was once held to be. Darkness has come over this modern spiritual Egypt, whilst renewed and

restored Israel in the adjacent region of Goshen has had an ever-increasing light. For centuries the parallel histories of Papal and Protestant lands have amply exemplified this. The Papal throne was never so unsettled. In one sense it has been actually upset. The temporal states of the Pope have been absorbed into the new kingdom of Italy. The Roman Pontiff has now no political throne, no temporal crown. His kingdom is full of darkness. Many thousands feel the predicted pain. They will not see the truth. They will magnify the man who usurps the chair of Divine Infallibility, the very throne of God. Thus and otherwise, all, it may be most unconsciously, "blaspheme the God of heaven." They persist in their various forms of idolatry, emphatically in that of one who would be the very last of the daughters of men to allow the very least of the human race to worship her as a goddess, or to make her occupy such a place, that the great saying of Paul could no longer be held to be true, that "there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus." Of such, and of all other evil works, "they repented not"; so that they would not be saved.

6. *Ver.* 12. "And the sixth poured out his bowl upon the great river, the (river) Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way might be made ready for the kings which come from the sunrising."

Those who interpret the sixth trumpet as pointing to the Mohammedan invasion of Christendom, coming from the geographical region of the literal Euphrates, naturally treat this bowl as poured on the Turkish empire; and it is certainly remarkable that that empire is at present, and has been for a long time, suffering as it would if under this very judgment. Its resources in people, as well as in wealth, are certainly drying up; and it is becoming less and less an obstacle to Christian spiritual conquest, whether of the East or of the world generally. Still, we are fully persuaded that, both trumpet and bowl being carefully considered, this will not be finally accepted as correct. We think we have given the key to the true interpretation of both by treating the Euphrates referred to as the mystic river on which the mystic Babylon is said to stand, and whose waters are mystically declared to be the peoples and multitudes over which the mystic woman or city is said to reign. It certainly seems most unnatural to suppose the four angels bound in the natural river, whereas all seems intelligible when we regard the river as symbolical of these very peoples.

Further, those who interpret the trumpet literally of the river,

are compelled to interpret the bowl or vial symbolically of the resources of the Turkish empire. This inconsistency is utterly fatal. Besides, the whole of these plagues are evidently connected with the empire of the beast, which alone is referred to in this most important section of this Book. To introduce the Turkish empire here would be to introduce confusion into the whole system of symbolical representation. The throne of the beast, we have just found, has been made to suffer. The capital of His kingdom, mystical Babylon, is soon to be taken and destroyed. This has been clearly announced already. The way into the city is here referred to. A large part of it has actually fallen. The siege is more than begun. The walls, unlike those of the true city of God, are built by human hands; but, like her ancient prototype, are high and broad and strong. As in the case of the same prototype, entrance is regarded as easy only by the river-gates. The waters of the mystic river, like those of the literal, must be dried up or diverted from their course. Much has been thought and said concerning these "kings from the sunrising," or from the East. All sorts of fancies have been entertained, and all kinds of conjectures made. Those who remember the history, and make the simplest use of it, need be at no real loss to understand. Cyrus and Darius, kings of the Médes and Persians, "kings from the sunrising," after prolonging the siege of Babylon, prepared an easy way of entrance into the devoted city, by turning the course of the river and making use of the river-gates under the cloud of night. This is most fitly and beautifully used symbolically of the mystical Babylon.

The waters of the great river, elsewhere said to represent the many peoples over which the city reigns, are here said to be dried up, that a like way might be opened up for those symbolically called, as were Cyrus and Darius, "the kings from the sunrising"; so that we are left with only two very simple questions to answer—namely, what is meant by this drying up of the river? and who are those whom God has appointed to take the mystic city? If the waters of the river represent the peoples under the sway of the city, the drying up of the waters cannot but mean either the decrease of the peoples themselves or the decrease of those on whom dependence had been put for sufficient protection and support, and thus the real available resources of the city. Absolutely the nominal adherents of the Pope have been and are greatly increasing, as already said, through the natural growth of population. However, in proportion to the increase of the number of Protestant or antagonistic forces, that increase has been small. After the Reformation, the armies at the

service of Rome were vast and highly trained in comparison of those prepared to defend the cause of liberty and of the Protestant faith. However, the words of Cardinal Manning so far suggest the diminution here referred to. The Roman Catholic powers of Europe withhold the aid of their armies, or of physical force, to uphold the pretensions of the Popedom. Till lately, liberty to preach the gospel, or in any way to assail Romanism, was everywhere forbidden and prevented in almost all Roman Catholic countries. The liberty now granted has really opened the gates even of Rome itself to the diffusion of Christian truth, and thus to assault on the antichristian system. Those symbolised by Cyrus and Darius, the kings from the sunrising, true Christians, are thus everywhere entering. The way has been more or less prepared, and the hosts of the true Israel are more than beginning to carry on the war.

7. *Vers. 13-16.* "And I saw (coming) out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits, as it were frogs: for they are spirits of devils, working signs; which go forth unto the kings of the whole world, to gather them together unto the war of the great day of God, the Almighty. (Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.) And He gathered them together unto the place which is called in Hebrew Har-Magedon."

(1) This vision seems closely connected with the last. The idea appears to be that three distinct kinds of spirit, generated and developed through the practical teaching of these three agents, take possession of the peoples supporting Babylon and symbolised by the waters of the Euphrates. What is really meant by these spirits, we can only conjecture, and that simply by considering the distinct source of each. Some have supposed the spirit of scepticism, the spirit of despotism, and the spirit of superstition or religious error. At present we see socialistic atheism and religious rationalism, which ever tends towards atheism, almost everywhere rising and seeking to reign. We also see the Papacy developed in recent times to its full possible height, in its idolatrous worship of the Virgin, and in the decree of Papal Infallibility, beyond which the antichristian system can hardly be conceived to rise; whilst, along with these enormities, we find Protestants developing their errors, so as to meet the claims of the Papacy, and to prepare the way for the return of many to the antichristian fold. Further, whilst political despotism has received a wonderful check, and constitutional

government a like wonderful development in these recent times, we can easily see how despotism may receive a new and final development in order to the preservation of order and power, as threatened by the growing power and desperate movements of atheistical socialism. These may seem so perfectly antagonistic as to be incapable of being led on to a combined attack on the forces of the great Leader on the white horse. However, all are essentially opposed to true and vital Christianity, or to the truth of Divine Revelation. All the kings of the earth, mere worldly powers of every kind, religious, political, intellectual, are to be gathered together, or to be combined for the last great conflict between Divine revealed Christian truth and human godless error,—between Christ and His Church risen as from the dead and His and her foes of every kind, before His glorious and millennial reign. All proceeds now and before our eyes. The end is in the future. This is expressly called “the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.” With Him on the one side, there can be no hope of ultimate success on the other. Having made this great announcement, we find introduced, by way of strong awakening interjection, the words which follow.

(2) “*Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.*” This cannot refer to the final coming of Christ, but to His coming at this special era of mighty conflict. The words, apart from any special period or special application, express one most important feature of Christ’s continuous and providential government of the world. “He comes as a thief.” He cannot do otherwise. Even the more faithful of His followers require to be kept in ignorance of the time of His coming to take them individually from among the engagements and temptations of this life. This expression, then, need not refer to any final or even special coming at all. It is used of a whole period of warfare and preparation for war. To all His professed followers during that period, He lifts the voice of warning, as He did to the Church in Sardis, and certainly apart from the thought of any special coming,—“If thou shalt not watch, I will come as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.” Here, some sufficient reason was seen for this awakening call. In some special manner, but not personal in the sense of bodily or visible, He was about to come; and He may refer to that coming, yet by no means necessarily, but only in such a way or at such a time as would be to their surprise and also to their shame. And hence it is added, “Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments.” Whilst such an unexpected coming of Christ is to

be kept in view, the real watching demanded is not that of so directly looking for His coming as to prevent surprise, but that of carefully and prayerfully looking for the path of Christian obedience, that no temptation be allowed to mislead, and that no sin be permitted to pollute. Whilst the Christian thus watches, and thus keeps by the path of duty and by that alone, come when Christ may, and come for whatever purpose He may, there will be no real surprise, the garments will be kept in purity, no nakedness will appear, and no shame will be seen. However appropriate this warning during the time here alluded to, we may well take it to be appropriate at every time, even at our own time, and for our own real good. Christ most faithfully and earnestly gave it to His personal disciples, and through them to His disciples of every age. The wisest Christians best know its worth, and make the most careful use of it.

(3) "*And He gathered them together into the place which is called in Hebrew Har-Magedon*" (mount of decision or of judgment). The right translation may be "they," as in the Revised Version,—these unclean spirits. Yet it may be "He," in which case it will be God, who said, Judges iv. 7, "I will draw unto thee to the river Kishon Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand." So here, God may be said to draw these kings to meet their Conqueror at Har-Magedon. As Deborah sings of the kings of Canaan, chap. v. 19, "The kings came and fought; then fought the kings of Canaan, in Taanach by the waters of Megiddo: they took no gain of money. They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera,"—so the kings are here said to be drawn for like battle and like defeat; only here we have the language of symbol, as there we have the words of historical fact, only in poetical form. Many have been anxious and perplexed to know what and where this place and battle are or mean. They expect some visible pitched battle in some actual field of bloody conflict, and that between Christ in personal visible form and His great army of warrior saints on the one side, and the kings of the earth and their countless hosts led by the beast and the false prophet on the other. How strange! Is not the Warrior on the white horse, with the sword proceeding out of His mouth, a symbol, and no more than a symbol, however truly, of Jesus Christ? Are not these saintly followers on white horses, arrayed, not as soldiers of the world and with carnal weapons of war, but in white linen, "the righteousness of saints," symbolical of the true and faithful witnesses of Christ? Why not symbolical also,

the great battle in ancient times by the waters of Megiddo? Why not all symbolical, here as elsewhere, certainly of great realities, still simply and solely symbolical? The symbols John saw. The realities were beyond his reach. To represent a whole course of action, say a whole series of battles, under the figure of some great battle, lasting it may seem for only a very short time, is in keeping with the whole structure and character of this Book.

The war here spoken of may be that of many ages and in many lands. To our mind, it seems to be very greatly more than begun : we seem to be in the very midst of it. Wherever we see pure Scriptural emancipated Christianity contending, here for very life and there for triumphant victory, there we see the great battle of Har-Magedon. Wherever the three terrible foes of scepticism, despotism and false religion, joined it may be by many another, fight for supremacy, separately or in combination, there the kings of the earth and their armies may be assuredly seen. We have not to go from home, or from one land to another, to find this mystic field of battle. Megiddo was within the land of Israel. It is now in symbol in the midst of the Christian people. All Christians are called, and called now, to engage in this great contest. They are thoughtless or blind who cannot see the foe, the field, and the battle. All is again referred to in chap. xix. 11-21. Much more may be involved than we have yet suggested. Out of all we have alluded to there may arise strife after strife of a more carnal and less bloodless nature. Though the army of the King of kings, clothed in the fine linen of true righteousness alone, wield no material weapons of destruction, their great Leader "rules the nations with a rod of iron," and may make use of any one nation to chastise or even to put down another nation which may be or may have been guilty of crushing His own faithful, but unarmed and harmless followers. Indirectly, then, if not directly, this "war of God" may be attended by all the bloodshed which seems to be suggested by "the winepress of the wrath of God," which is said, chap. xix. 15, to be trodden by this very King who rules the nations, which will not have Him to rule over them, with a rod of iron.

8. *Vers. 17-21.* "And the seventh poured out his bowl upon the air ; and there came forth a great voice out of the temple, from the throne, saying, It is done : and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunders ; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since there were men upon the earth, such an earthquake, so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell : and Babylon the great was remembered in the sight of God, to give unto

her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And great hail, (every stone) about the weight of a talent, cometh down out of heaven upon man: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof is exceeding great."

(1) "*And the seventh poured out his bowl upon the air; and there came forth a great voice out of the temple, from the throne, saying, It is done.*" Here some regard the air as the abode of Satan, "the prince of the power of the air"; so that he and his kingdom are to be viewed as specially assailed. Hence, as the dust was sprinkled by Moses towards heaven, when the boils broke out on the Egyptians, we may suppose some like act here. However, we may err in giving to this region so significant a place, or in taking it in so literal a sense. The real plague, we are afterwards told, was a most destructive storm of hail, which is due to the state of the atmosphere or air. Under the first trumpet we find hail; but not alone—"hail and fire mingled with blood." Here we have hail alone, and that evidently supernatural. When this last bowl was poured out, a great voice from God Himself proclaimed, "It is done." This work of Divine judgment was now complete, the last plague had been inflicted, and the redemption of God's people was drawing nigh. This does not mean that the result of the pouring out of the bowl was perfectly realised. That was now done which would certainly be followed by that result. A long period was doubtless referred to. Here the air, like the sea, the sun, etc., is a part of the kingdom of the beast doomed to destruction. "It is done," thus implies that the whole of that kingdom has now been dealt with and prepared for final destruction.

(2) "*And there were lightnings, and voices, and thunders; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since there were men upon the earth, such an earthquake, so great.*" We have here the tokens of the Divine presence and power, with an announcement of such a vast revolution as never before took place among men. To that revolution the words "It is done" may specially refer—that is to say, when it is said of the last plague, "It is done," the same may be said of what thus follows the pouring out, not of the last bowl alone, but of all the bowls as containing the whole wrath of God, or as leading to the entire intended destruction. In this way, connecting the earthquake with all the plagues, we can, as we have done, connect the storm of hail specially with the last.

(3) "*And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell; and Babylon the great was remembered in the*

sight of God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath." As a result of the great earthquake which followed the ascension of the witnesses, we are told "the tenth part of the city fell,"—fell away from the capital or kingdom of the beast. As the result of this subsequent and greater earthquake the same city is divided into three parts. The kingdom would thus seem to be divided against itself, to be no longer under the sway of the one antichristian sceptre. A great breaking down is thus implied, whose exact nature we may not have sufficient means to determine.

It may not be intended that we should infer an exactly tripartite division at all. As "the third part" is used of a great part, a three-fold division may mean no more than a great or thorough division. Taking this view of the words, we can be at no loss to find abundant historical illustration. How many divisions in point of interest, party, politics, modes of belief or of unbelief, may we now find among those who have for ages been taught to hold that no man has a right, at least in matters of religion, to judge for himself, to have a mind of his own, to interpret the Bible, to follow any course of religious thought or action, apart from the infallible authority of the supposed Christian Church! Along with this division we are told that "the cities of the nations fell." The great Babylon is representative of the spiritual and the ecclesiastical: these cities are representative of the temporal and the political. For ages they yielded to the supreme authority of the one spiritual capital. Now they refuse so to yield. They fall away from her. We are not told whether this fall implies a new acknowledgment of Christ and the true religion. All may become more or less sceptical. To an immense extent this has been the case most remarkably in France. However, the political authority of Babylon, long claimed, may be and has been thrown off by multitudes who express at least no desire to separate spiritually from the great city. This whole representation sets forth what will assuredly take place before the final fall and eternal destruction of the implied false antichristian system. That fall has by no means yet come, though by way of anticipation it has been declared to have done so. However delayed, it is not forgotten. It is "remembered in the sight of God," and will most certainly come at the irreversibly appointed time. How fearful the description of her doom, "to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath"! A vast amount of this has been given already.

(4) "*And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And great hail, (every stone) about the weight of a talent,*

cometh down out of heaven upon men : and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail ; for the plague thereof is exceeding great." These closing words seem to confirm the view taken of this seventh plague—namely, that, though the great earthquake is introduced as the result of all the plagues, yet the last connected with the air is really that of this tremendous storm of hail. Allusion is here made to the instances recorded in the Old Testament of the Divine employment of such a storm in the overthrow and destruction of the enemies of Israel. The adherents of Antichrist, and, we may suppose, those who may have withdrawn from his authority and yet failed to accept that of the true King, seem to be the men who suffered and the men who blasphemed. As again and again said, impenitence first, destruction next.

(5) So ends this great work of judgment, or rather this symbolic representation of it. However, we must not forget to point to the corresponding and contemporaneous close of more than one other series of Divine operations. At the close of the first series, that of the six seals, we find something remarkably similar to that just under review. When that seal was opened, we are told that "every mountain and island were moved out of their places. . . . the kings of the earth, and the princes, and the chief captains and every bondman and every freeman. . . say to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb ; for the great day of their wrath is come ; and who is able to stand ?" Again, at the close of another series, or after the seventh trumpet-angel sounded, we are told—but in this case by way of anticipation—that "the four and twenty elders . . . worshipped God, saying, We give Thee thanks . . . because Thou hast taken Thy great power, and didst reign. And the nations were wroth, and Thy wrath came and the time of the dead to be judged," etc. Once more, at the close of a series of predictions as to the treatment and doom of the beast, chap. xiv., we have these words : "And the angel cast his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vintage of the earth, and cast it into the winepress. . . of the wrath of God." And now here we find what we said was referred to by way of anticipation after the sounding of the seventh angel, whose third or last woe is summed up in these seven last plagues, namely, that Babylon is about to drink of "the cup of the wine of the fierceness of the wrath of God," and that "every island fled away, and the mountains were not found,"—they too, as under the sixth seal, "had fled away." In this way do these series

of operations or of events terminate in one common end, even that of the destruction of the antichristian powers and of the false, paganised, and yet professedly Christian Church. All has not yet been effected, but the end of all is shown to be at hand, or, by way of anticipation, is declared to be done. The day of the true Church's redemption has thus all but come. Only the realisation of what has been symbolically or verbally anticipated yet intervenes. Much has been shown to have been effected before the time here alluded to, both for the destruction of the false and for the restoration of true kingdom of God. All this will appear as we proceed.

III.

CHAPTER XVII.

VISION OF THE MYSTIC WOMAN, OR BABYLON THE GREAT, OR THE ANTICHRISTIAN KINGDOM.

1. *Vers. 1, 2.* "And there came one of the seven angels that had the seven bowls, and spake with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the judgment of the great harlot that sitteth on many waters; with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and they that dwell in the earth were made drunken with the wine of her fornication."

(1) This angel, as one appointed to execute the Divine judgment on Antichrist, is fitly represented as revealing to the apostle the character of the woman or the nature of the city here alluded to. Apart from this revelation it would be hard, if not impossible, to understand the greater part of this Book. This chapter is closely connected with the twelfth and thirteenth chapters, and, with them, forms an important section, at once giving a clear and compact revelation of the king and kingdom of the great Apostasy, and, as just said, enabling us to understand very much, which must otherwise have remained incomprehensible. The words of the angel imply that he is about to describe what greatly belongs to the past, and what now is about to pass away. He proposes to inform John as to the character and destiny of what we have been treating as the false, corrupt, paganised Church, the Church which has become faithless to the King of heaven, and treacherously associated herself with the kings of the earth. As the little Lamb on the one hand, and the wild beast on the other, most fitly represent Christ and Antichrist,—the woman clothed with the sun and this woman arrayed in garments of earthly grandeur as fitly symbolise the true and the false Church and kingdom of Jesus Christ. The latter is therefore called by the

vilest and most fearful of all names, "The great harlot," as if no one could equal her in vice and self-degradation.

(2) The description is very wonderful. "She sitteth on many waters." Without explanation this would be quite unintelligible. However, she is also described as a city, the mystic Babylon, and this name is a key to the meaning of the words. Ancient Babylon sat or was built on the many waters of the Euphrates; and these waters are, ver. 15, mystically used to signify "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues," over which she wields a mighty and mysterious power. She is thus highly exalted among the kingdoms of the world. She has yielded to that temptation of Satan which Christ so decidedly repelled. She has parted with the glory and blessedness of fidelity to the King of heaven for the enjoyment of the pleasures and honours which come from the kings and kingdoms of the earth. Nor is she guilty of such infidelity alone: she is here charged with the guilt of corrupting and seducing "them that dwell in the earth," those who may profess to belong to the true Church, but who are of the earth earthly, and so to be contrasted with true Christians, "whose citizenship is in heaven," and who are finely described in this Book as "dwelling in heaven."

2. *Vers. 3-5.* "And he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet-coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stone and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations, even the unclean things of her fornication, and upon her forehead a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH."

(1) "*And he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness.*" "Not," says Alford, "'a wilderness.' Such inferences from the absence of the article in this later Greek, never secure, are more than ever unsafe when a preposition precedes: and the usage of the LXX. should have prevented any such rendering here. In no fewer than twenty places they use the word *ἐρημος* anarthously, where there can be no question that '*the wilderness*' is the only rendering. . . . The most natural way of accounting for the Seer being taken into the wilderness here, is that he was to be shown Babylon, which was in the wilderness, and the overthrow of which, in the prophecy from which come the very words *ἔπεσεν* (*πέπτωκεν*, LXX.) *Βαβυλῶν* (Isa. xxi. 9) is headed *τὸ ὄραμα τῆς ἐρήμου*. So that, by the analogy of prophecy, the journey to witness the fall

of Babylon would be εἰς ἔρημον." Alford seems correct in thus using the definite article, "*the* wilderness." His reason for the reference to the wilderness is very ingenious, and unless a better can be suggested, might be accepted. It is certainly striking that the words should be used as a heading to such a prophecy of Babylon, "The burden of the wilderness of the sea." However, the words omitted by Alford, "of the sea," seem to take very considerably from the force of his argument; and, as "the wilderness" is used in the Old Testament generally for that through which the emancipated Israelites passed, we seem rather called upon to inquire whether there may not be a special reference to some other wilderness which that may be supposed to symbolise. Such a reference we find suggested by Webster and Wilkinson, in their most valuable commentary of the Greek Testament,—“The reference to ἔρημος here indicates, after the manner of the Apocalypse, that this, personification is in a certain specific relation to the former. “Where we look for the woman of xii. 6,” (and therefore of xii. 1, 2, 14, “the woman clothed with the sun,”) “we find this woman. In the place of the true Church is the false apostate Church, the nominal Church in a corrupt state.” This seems vastly to be preferred. John had been led to associate with the idea of the wilderness that of the abode of the true but persecuted Church, and, when carried to any wilderness or desert place, he would naturally think of that abode. Further, this view is very strongly supported by the fact that John was actually carried there for the very purpose of having a vision of the false Church as contrasted most marvellously with the true.

(2) “*And I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet-coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.*” What a contrast between this and the woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, in heaven, full of heavenly life, arrayed in heavenly light, upheld by heavenly power! This woman is in the wilderness, the very emblem of wickedness and vice, supported by lawless worldly power, and guiding the movements of that same wild and brutish force. “*A scarlet-coloured beast.*” Like that of the dragon, the colour seems typical of cruelty and of blood. “*A beast,*” implying a want of all true reason and religion, an utter ignorance and disregard of the claims of true human nature, of true reason and conscience, of true manhood as stamped with the image of God. We are apt to think this symbol of worldly power most extravagant, if not absolutely absurd. Why should the most admired and glorified, and, we may say, deified of

mankind, the great heroes, conquerors, kings of history—nay, whose history makes up the greater part of the history of the world—the Nebuchadnezzars, the Cyruses, the Alexanders, the Cæsars, the Charlemagnes, the Buonapartes of almost universal wonder and praise, be symbolised as the very wildest of the wild beasts of the desert or the field? It cannot be denied that so they have been represented in Scripture, especially in the Book of Daniel and in this Book of Revelation. Are these Books, then, true and faithful revelations at once of God to man and of man to mankind? Or, does not the falsity of the revelation of man to mankind prove the falsity of the revelation of God to man? Ah! no. The awful truth of the former is no feeble confirmation of the truth of the latter. We need no proof of the axiomatic affirmation, that “man being in honour and understanding not, is as the beasts that perish”: that is to say, God is so the life and glory of man, the all in all of true manhood, that, apart from the knowledge and service of God, Science herself refuses to raise man into a separate class, and can crown him with no higher glory than that of being at the head of the animal world. In this respect Scripture is just science in another form. What is true of individual man is emphatically true of the godless, despotic and persecuting kings and kingdoms of the world. What this cruel wild beast symbolises we think clearly indicated by this and the twelfth and thirteenth chapters, as well as by other portions of this Book.

“*Full of the names of blasphemy.*” In the case of the beast of the thirteenth chapter these names are said to be on the seven heads. The difference is immaterial. The agent thus symbolised as a beast acts towards others, and is treated by others, as if he were a God. He claims Divine attributes, prerogatives, honours and services. His whole life is one continuous blasphemy. In assuming the prerogatives of Godhead he practically denies the divinity of manhood, treats mankind as without “discourse of reason,” and so demonstrates his own want of true reason or of true divinity, and the correctness of this Divine Scriptural picture of himself. The man who, as king or subject, treats his fellow-man as a beast, makes himself in reality, and therefore in the sight of God, not a god, not a man, but a beast, a cruel wild beast.

“*Having seven heads and ten horns,*” like the dragon of the twelfth chapter and the wild beast of the thirteenth. The words which follow reveal the real relation in which this stands to that of the thirteenth chapter. That relation, which we shall find to be of partial difference, and yet of essential identity, we shall consider in

due course. One point of difference we may note,—here neither heads nor horns are said to have crowns. In the case of the dragon the heads and not the horns were crowned. In the case of the first wild beast the horns and not the heads were so. In this case neither heads nor horns are said to be so. The reason for all this we find afterwards pretty clearly indicated. This, as well as what is meant by the seven heads and ten horns, we shall leave for after consideration.

(3) "*And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stone and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations, even the unclean things of her fornication.*" The woman is dressed as a queen. She appears in royal purple and scarlet. The beast on which she sits, by which she is supported, and which yet she controls and guides, represents a king,—a king of the earth, worshipped as a god by them who dwell on the earth,—a king with whom she, professedly the queen of heaven, associates as if in conjugal relationship. She appears, accordingly, as a queen of the earth. Her royal robes are of earthly grandeur and of earthly manufacture. She has no garment of solar light. Her ornaments are ornaments of material wealth and beauty. She has no crown made of the stars of heaven. She has fallen from her exalted place. No angels of light and love attend her person or show her all possible respect, for the sake of her and their Lord and King. She is no real queen. She is not so much as the true spouse of an earthly king. She is lawfully married to none; and yet she is magnified and glorified by millions of mankind, and that also by the kings and captains and great ones of the earth, as if she were of heavenly origin, the very Bride and Wife of the King of heaven. She is thus of most awful character. That character is here revealed.

(4) "*And upon her forehead a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.*" "MYSTERY." It has been asked, Is this a part of the name? We can hardly doubt it: yes, we have here the great mystery of iniquity, the great apostasy, the mysterious apostate Church. A more notable mystery in organised form cannot be found on earth. Of course there is in a far higher sense a more notable mystery still, the most wonderful and glorious mystery of the Church of God, or of the true Bride and Wife of the Lamb. The mystical relationship of husband and wife, of Jehovah and Israel, is again and again referred to in the Old Testament. When we contemplate the Divine glory of the one and the human

origin and unworthiness of the other, we may well exclaim, Mystery, mystery! yes, how surpassingly mysterious the exaltation of the human into eternal and blessed union with the Divine! Great, infinitely great, is indeed this "mystery of godliness." Here we have a mystery of a perfectly opposite character, even that of the most wonderful degradation,—that of the Virgin Bride and Wife of the Lamb turned into "*The mother of the harlots and of the abominations of the earth.*"

But why this further name, "*Babylon the Great*"? The guilty woman is also a great and guilty city, not the Holy Jerusalem, not the capital of the true Israel of God, though called by that sacred name and treated as such by "them that dwell in the earth," but the great Babylon, the abode of all godlessness and vice, the gorgeous capital of the vast empire of Antichrist, this very beast. We have been led to trace the most mysterious transformation. We found that when the temple was to be measured, the court was to be left out, as to be trodden of the Gentiles and not of the real Israel. These Gentiles called the place of their feet by the name of Jerusalem. Afterwards it was called by a truer name, even "the great city, which spiritually and mystically is called Sodom, the abode of vice, and Egypt, the house of Israel's bondage, where also the Lord was crucified—Jerusalem certainly, not the Jerusalem of the true worship of Jehovah, but the Jerusalem which killed the prophets, stoned the messengers of God and crucified the Lord of glory." In chap. xiv., where the Lamb and His followers are contrasted with this very beast and his followers, she for the first time receives this most appropriate name, in the words of the angel, who, in pronouncing her doom, gives her the very character given to her in this place, "*Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, which hath made all the nations to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornications.*" She calls herself by the name of the Holy City of God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, the Holy Catholic Church of Jesus Christ. Here she is called Babylon the Great, the proud capital of the world, the very synagogue of Satan, the dwelling-place of every foul and unclean thing. What a contradiction! what self-delusion! what blindness on the part of her citizens! what ignorance on the part of too many of the very citizens of Zion! What foolishness on the part of the world! yet, what clear-sightedness on the part of multitudes of more or less sceptical men! No more appropriate name could have been written on the forehead of this wonderful character than that which we here find—"MYSTERY."

3. *Vers. 6, 7.* "And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of

saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. And when I saw her, I wondered with a great wonder. And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou wonder? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and the ten horns."

(1) "*And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of saints, and with the blood of the martyrs (witnesses) of Jesus.*" She might appear drunken to the eye of John; but nothing short of express revelation could make known to him that it was "with the blood of saints and martyrs." In this way we are led to conclude that very much connected with these symbols was conveyed to him by direct internal impression. False, and yet thinking herself true, she persecuted to the very death the true, thinking them false. All this shows who were the martyrs of the sixth and twentieth chapters, even those with whose blood this woman was drunken. The words imply that persecution was carried to a fearful extent. Do we ask, By whom? or, What actually persecuting power does she represent? Some say Pagan Rome, which was certainly a terribly persecuting power. The martyrs of the fifth seal were undoubtedly slain by her. But, under the same seal, we are told of other martyrs to be slain at some future time. The two classes are so alluded to in chap. xx. 4 as to show that the former were slain by Pagan Rome, "beheaded," according to her manner of execution, "for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God," and that the latter were slain by Rome Papal, as appears from the description given of them—"such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand." If this second persecuting power was not this very beast, or this "woman drunken with the blood of saints and martyrs," or both viewed as one and the same, and was not at the same time Papal Rome, we do not believe it possible to find in all history any ecclesiastical or political or politico-ecclesiastical power which could be fitly represented by this most remarkable symbol. The whole history of Papal Rome demonstrates that we could not have a more correct and faithful picture of her, as seen in her relation to what we may call the most truly Scriptural Christians, or to those who at least sought to be Christians according to Scripture, than that which this most wonderful complex symbol supplies. Others have persecuted. Other Churches have persecuted. Some of them for a season too closely followed her most unchristian example. The growing knowledge of the Scriptures has taught them better things. Still, as we have said, no other persecuting power can be found so

thoroughly true to the fearful picture here held up for the inspection and judgment of all the students of sacred and secular history.

(2) "*And when I saw her, I wondered with a great wonder. And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou wonder? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and the ten horns.*" Nor need any one wonder at his so wondering. The sight and insight were most wonderful. How wonderful the sight of this woman as contrasted with that of the sun-clad woman! How much more wonderful that he should see the one when he expected to see the other, and when he was led to think of the terrible transformation of the true into the false Church of Jesus Christ! It has been well said that if he had regarded this woman as representing Pagan Rome, he could not have so wondered, as he was too well acquainted, too practically familiar, with the persecuting spirit and conduct of the heathen empire, to show any surprise at such a symbol. Nay, we cannot suppose him so to have said, if he understood that symbol of any heathen kingdom. But that the Church, in the planting and tending of which he had had so noble and anxious a share, the Church which had suffered so much from the persecutions of Rome, should be so paganised, nay, so satanised, as to become the most cruel and ferocious and deadly enemy of the very saints and martyrs of Jesus, could not fail to excite, not only the greatest wonder, but also the most awful horror, in the mind and heart of the apostle. The angel, whilst asking "Why didst thou wonder?" knew too well, waited for no reply, but went on to give all needful explanation,—"*I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast which carrieth her.*" This does not imply that John did not so far understand, or that he had not drawn the inference which we have supposed, and which excited so much and so terrible surprise.

4. Ver. 8. "The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and is about to come up out of the abyss, and to go into perdition. And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast, how that he was, and is not, and yet is (or shall come)."

(1) *The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and is about to come up out of the abyss, and to go into perdition.*" It cannot be doubted that this beast is the same as that of the thirteenth chapter, not in its original form, when it arose out of the sea, and before it received its deadly wound, but in its second or renewed form, and after the deadly wound had been healed, or after it was

raised from the dead, not now out of the sea, but out of the abyss. It is thus at once a totally new object, and yet essentially the same restored to life again. Pointing to the future, it could not possibly represent Pagan Rome. Any interpretation, therefore, which would identify this symbol with Pagan Rome, must be set aside as absolutely inadmissible. Nor can the woman be identified with Pagan Rome, which could not be represented as sitting on what was to come into existence after the time intended, or, in fact, as sitting on any such symbolic beast at all.

The order suggested by the symbols is very simple and clear. *First.* We have a beast which rises out of the sea with seven heads and ten horns. *Secondly.* We are told that one of these was wounded to death. As these heads represent consecutive kingdoms or empires, under which the one beast or one world existed, each head represented the world as it existed during some one corresponding period. The deadly wound, then, implied the death of the beast which received it, or the death of the kingdom or empire represented by the wounded head. *Thirdly.* When the wound was healed the beast was restored to life again. *Fourthly.* The beast thus restored is said to have come up, not out of the sea, but out of the abyss. There, then, the deadly wound was healed, or there the new life was created. The wonderful resurrection was thus the work of Satan, the great spirit and king of the abyss; and not of God, whose abode is in heaven, whence the true Church, as His work, is said to come down. *Fifthly.* This beast from the abyss, being the beast from the sea raised from the dead, must possess some like nature or even some identical character. In no other way could one organised community, kingdom or empire, be said to be some other restored to life or raised from the dead. If, then, Rome Pagan be symbolised by the beast from the sea, some other kingdom or empire symbolised by the beast from the abyss must be essentially or in spirit and character the same as Pagan Rome, and therefore cannot but be Papal Rome, or some other kingdom or empire resembling Pagan Rome and coming in its stead. If Papal Rome is in spirit and character totally different from Pagan, then we must look in history for another; and then, if no other can be found, the wonderful symbol has not been realised. However, the evidence of the pagan spirit and character, or of the unchristian spirit and character of Papal Rome, is more than sufficient, whilst there has arisen no other empire which the symbol could fitly represent. Further, we know of no other reason for the statement that this beast came from the abyss whilst every other came from the sea, but this,—that the great

change was religious, a perversion of Christian truth, and therefore a work of Satan, whose part it is to pervert the truth of God and of Christ.

"And go into perdition,"—return whence it came. The other beasts may be changed. They represent empires, which may be converted to God. The case of this one is hopeless. Many, doubtless, under the delusive power of Antichrist, are destined to be converted to Christ; but the antichristian system, and all who finally adhere to it, seem, as here and afterwards said, destined to perish utterly. As already observed, the whole work is peculiarly that of Satan, and it appears to be emphatically declared to return to him.

(2) *"And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast, how that he was, and is not, and yet is (or shall come)."* How mighty and awful an antagonist Roman Paganism had been to the Christian Church! Yet it seemed to have been utterly destroyed. Now it rises to still greater antagonistic power, only in wonderfully altered form. According to the Revised Version, these persons appear to wonder before it has reappeared, or before "he shall come." This suggests the adoption of a wrong text, or the correctness of the Authorised Version. We may, indeed, solve the difficulty by supposing the wonder to follow the coming viewed as at this time still future. This wonder seems totally different from that of John, and like that of chap. xiii. 3,—*"And the whole earth wondered after the beast"*—were carried away with admiration of the beast. The persons spoken of are not real Christians. Their names are not written in the Book of Life, or recorded there as of those born in Zion or into the kingdom of heaven. They are of the earth earthly, and cannot appreciate the things of that kingdom. They are the same as those spoken of in chap. xiii. 8, where the Lamb is apparently said to have been slain, and not this record to have been made, *"from the foundation of the world."* The simpler statement of this verse would tend to prove that in the other the words *"of the Lamb that hath been slain"* should be taken parenthetically. True Christians have no such admiration. They do not mistake worldly greatness for true moral and spiritual goodness. The idea of the apostle Paul in his description of the great apostasy is again and again suggested in this part of this Book,—that all were susceptible of the delusion of Satan who *"received not the love of the truth that they might be saved."*

5. *Vers. 9, 10.* "Here is the mind that hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth, and are seven

kings; the five are fallen, the one is, the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a little while."

(1) "*Here is the mind that hath wisdom,*"—not only that wisdom of which we spoke at the close of chap. xiii. as clearly and spiritually discerning the true antichristian character of the beast, and thus detecting his potential presence where the many did not suspect it, but also that understanding which in the end contrives to discover the mystic meaning of the symbol itself. Such understanding is here declared to be needed, and also pronounced to be wisdom. Such seems to be the common view, as it was ours. We are now led to adopt another—namely, that "*the mind that hath wisdom*" is not that of any mere reader, but rather that of the speaker, the interpreting angel. At verse 7 he says, "I will tell thee the mystery of the woman"; and then he goes on to explain, yet only by giving a further symbolic description. Now he seems to do precisely the same thing, though using a different expression, "*Here is the mind that hath wisdom,*" the mind which has the wisdom rightly to interpret; and then, as before, he goes on to give a symbolic interpretation, namely, "*The seven heads are seven mountains,*" etc.

(2) "*The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth, and are seven kings.*" Here is almost universally supposed to be a reference to the seven hills on which Rome was built, whose well-known name accordingly was "*Urbs Septicollis.*" At first sight this would seem correct; and yet, it might at once occur that there was not much likelihood of seven heads of a living being having been used to symbolise seven lifeless objects, seven mere material hills (not mountains) on which a merely material city was built. Such a reference is perhaps slightly supported by the Authorised Version, —"*And there are seven kings,*" as if these stood in no relation to the mountains. The better translation of the Revised Version, "*and they are,*" or better still, "*and are seven kings,*" shows the real connection of the two clauses, or that the mountains and the kings point to identically the same objects, even some seven kingdoms or empires, in which case the supposed reference, unless in some inclusive or allusive way, is clearly disproved. Thinking Rome directly intended, some have held that these kings represent, not distinct kingdoms, but seven forms of government which successively obtained in ancient Rome—namely, those of kings, consuls, dictators, decemvirs, military tribunes, emperors, and, according to some, "the Gothic kingdom of Italy under Theodoric and the Exarchate of Ravenna" (Webster and Wilkinson).

We shall refer to no other view proceeding on this idea of

forms of Roman government, and, we think, by no means worthy of acceptance. It supposes a mystical meaning to "the seven kings," to which the whole usage both of Daniel and of John lends not even the slightest support. The mystic meaning expressly given to the ten horns, that of ten kings or kingdoms, discountenances it. So does the unnaturalness of the use of the term, kings, to signify different forms of government of one and the same kingdom. Most unlikely, too, would any such reference to these forms be made in a Book which we find to borrow illustrations mainly from the Sacred Scriptures, and not from classic sources. That these heads cannot possibly be the hills of Rome, or the various forms of Roman government, is fully demonstrated by the fact that, whilst the mountains would thus be taken literally, and not symbolically as the context shows, the kings are such that out of them arises an eighth, which is certainly no mere form of government, but actually the revived head which had been wounded to death, nay, the very beast here, from first to last, treated of. This is positively expressed in ver. 11,—*"And the beast that was and is not, is himself also an eighth."* Besides, the same seven heads and ten horns belong to the dragon, the beast from the sea, and this revival of the latter or beast from the abyss. Nay, the beast from the sea, of which this is the revival, is certainly the fourth beast from the sea of Daniel with its ten horns. Once more, not only is the word "king" used by Daniel for a kingdom, but the word "mountain" is used for kingdom or empire also in the Old Testament, as in Zech. iv. 7, of Babylon, *"Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel (thou shalt become) a plain."* So Isaiah ii. 2, *"The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top or at the head of the mountains";* implying the rise of the true Israel as well as of the religion of Jehovah among the nations or kingdoms of the world. Also, and emphatically, of Babylon, Jer. li. 25, *"Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the Lord, which destroyest all the earth; . . . and I will roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain."*

The beast with its seven heads, the earth with its seven mountains, the world with its seven kingdoms, signify one and the same thing; only, as these kingdoms are successive, not only may all the heads be regarded as those of the one beast, but each head may, as in ver. 11, be viewed as a separate and entire kingdom or beast. We must turn, then, from the literal hills of Rome to seek for seven symbolic mountains of the earth. Of these, the Book of Daniel indisputably presents us with four,—namely, *Babylon*, which we

have found to be figuratively called a mountain, *Medo-Persia*, *Greece*, and that here symbolised, *Rome*. As five are said to have fallen and one is said to exist, even Rome, which thus becomes the sixth of the entire seven, we must find another two existing before the full rise of Babylon. As these mountains or kingdoms are all supposed to be more or less connected with the people of God, the Israel of all ages, we cannot find two others of the necessary date so intimately connected with Israel, in so real a sense so hostile to Israel, as *Egypt*, by which that people were so long oppressed and enslaved, and *Assyria*, by which the ten tribes were led captive and dispersed amongst the Assyrian peoples. The seventh and last head had yet to arise, and is said to "continue a little while." What Webster and Wilkinson make, and that very inconsistently, the seventh form of government of Rome, we may regard, consistently at least, as most likely this very head—namely, "the Gothic kingdom of Italy under Theodoric and the Exarchate of Ravenna."

The use of the figure of a mountain was very natural, if the woman was to be represented as sitting, like a city—like, if any will, Rome on her seven hills, as she is said, ver. 1, to "sit on many waters," which, in keeping with our view of these mystic mountains, are thus interpreted, ver. 15, by the angel: "The waters which thou sawest, where the harlot sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." The only objection, or the only difficulty which occurs in relation to this is, that these mountains or kingdoms are of successive existence: so that it would seem more natural to represent the woman or city symbolised by her as sitting rather on some one of them than on all the seven. However, the real idea intended is, that, as she sits upon the beast with its seven heads, which represents the world under its different forms, she here sits upon the earth with its seven mountains,—the kingdom of heaven, which, like the sun-clad woman, should rest on heavenly or Divine power alone, rests or sits upon the earth, or has been so perverted, or has so fallen, as to be supported by the mere powers or kingdoms of the world.

(3) "*The five are fallen, the one is, the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a little while.*" We have so far treated of these. The five fallen kingdoms we have regarded as Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece. "The one that is" can by no possibility be any other than Rome. The only difficulty is that of identifying the seventh with sufficient certainty. It had not then risen. It was to come after Rome. It was to be short-lived, though Alford oddly supposes this short duration to

mean really long duration. Into this strange view he was led by his mistaken idea of the seventh head as that of the "*Christian empire*," beginning with Constantine: during whose time the beast in his proper essence, in his fulness of opposition to God and His saints, ceases to be." "The Christian empire" at once the seventh head of the beast and the destroyer of the beast! Yet, immediately after, he truly interprets the perverted "Christian empire" as the eighth head of the beast, "the successor and result of the seven, following and springing out of them," the antichristian Church springing out of the seven heads of the beast, of which the seventh and last was the "Christian empire," under which the beast ceased to be! No. Like all the others, the seventh must be of heathen origin, or a head of the heathen world. The only one which seems to fulfil all the conditions of this symbolic representation is that of the barbarous nations by which the Western empire was destroyed, and which continued "for a short while." As said, all these heads represent the heathen world under the sway of so many "world-powers," and in some way connected with the Israel of God. That world is viewed as one, with one head rising and falling in succession. Persia rises and Babylon falls; Greece rises and Persia falls; Rome rises and Greece falls; the northern barbarians rise and Rome falls. Observe, each rises out of the one heathen world, and, though put down by that which follows, does not cease to exist or to form a part of the world. In not one of these cases was there inflicted such a deadly wound as that referred to in these thirteenth and nineteenth chapters.

Paganism cannot so wound Paganism. Christianity can alone kill Paganism by the conversion of Pagans. Sinners as sinners can be killed only by being made saints; and Pagans as Pagans can be killed only by being made Christians. The Roman-Pagan head was thus wounded to death by wide-spread conversion to Jesus Christ and to Jehovah, the only true and living God. So again that head so wounded by conversion to Christ can be healed or raised from the dead by perversion from Christ, by return to heathenism, or by the infusion of pagan error and pagan spirit, simply and only by such apostasy from Christ as Paul describes, or by such departure from Him as actually took place through the gradual, but most terrible, corruption and paganisation of the Church. Thus was the wounded head healed. Thus did this beast "*which was*," when in Roman-Pagan form, "*which is not*," when Christianity had dealt it its deadly blow, and "*which shall come*," when Paganism is restored or the Church paganised. This paganised Church, this restored Pagan

Roman empire, whilst calling itself Christian and thinking itself the very opposite and the most antagonistic to Paganism, forms the eighth head of the beast, or the really eighth pagan empire or beast, and "*is of the seven*" pagan heads or empires, because rising in their spirit and with their false religion; though, as we have said, not only claiming the Christian name, but magnifying itself as the only true and apostolic Christian Church.

We had said that the seventh, which the angel says was yet to come, being, like the others, a pagan head or a head of the heathen, seems most likely to be that of the kingdom of the northern nations, which arose towards the end of the fifth century, and "continued for a short while." It rose at the expense of the fall of Rome; but, as above illustrated, such a fall, or rather the cause of such a fall, is to be by no means identified with the deadly wound inflicted on the same empire of Rome. In the one case, as well as in the other, we have a wound, but only by a material sword; whilst in that other we have the use of no such sword, but of "the sword of the Spirit, the word of God," or "the word of God" as a mighty heavenly weapon, wielded by the hand of the Spirit of God or of Jesus Christ. All have not agreed as to this seventh head. For example, Wordsworth argues that it cannot be "the kingdom of Odoacer, A.D. 476, for this was a kingdom of Italy and *in* Italy; and added nothing to the power of Rome. Nor can it be the Gothic kingdom of Theodoric in Italy, A.D. 493—526; nor the Eastern Christian Emperor, or his deputy, the Exarch, at Ravenna, A.D. 566; for these were not augmentations of the Roman sovereign, but were rather like a continuation of *Roman Imperial Power* in another form." This argument seems not at all to the point. The barbarians came from another region; belonged to another part of the one heathen world symbolised by the one beast, and really put down that imperial power and took its place, as it ought to have done in order to form another independent head, the seventh here referred to. Then he adds, "There *was* a power, which rose upon the ruins of the Italian kingdom above mentioned, and which endured only for a short time. This was the *Imperial* power of *Germany*. . . . The Emperors had the election of the Pope. . . . But, however vast the power seemed to be, it was far from being a *solid and durable fabric*, . . . and in course of time a new powerful monarchy arose on that of the *German Empire*: that of the Roman Pontiffs, which monopolised both spiritual and temporal dominion, and extended its influence over *all the kingdoms of Christendom*."

Among various reasons against this hypothesis, we may note,

first, that this German empire cannot with any propriety be placed among the heads of the Pagan beast, but ought, as at least nominally Christian, to be regarded as one of the great agents through whose power the eighth or Papal head rose out of the seven pagan ones, as being essentially of the same pagan spirit and character; and, *secondly*, that this empire rose after Paganism in its native form had really lost its power and could never so rise as to be a pagan head, unless as forming a part of the restored Pagan or really Papal head. Thus we cannot at all accept this theory, and feel that we must fall back on the power or kingdom of the barbaric races as a most natural one, and as the only one which the history of those times really suggests. And we may add, that the foreknowledge of the rise of such a power to overthrow the great Roman empire, and soon to give place, as here indicated, to the eighth or most mysterious head of Papal Rome, or of the paganised Christian kingdom, is in itself most wonderful, and may well lead us to say, The finger of the all-seeing God is here.

6. *Ver.* 11. "And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is of the seven; and he goeth into perdition."

We have perhaps sufficiently fully treated of these most peculiar words already. Without those of the thirteenth chapter, relating to the wounded head which was restored to life, they would be quite unintelligible. The two descriptions of the one beast explain one another. Both together cast a clear light on the wonderful prophecy of Daniel, with its little horn of most mysterious powers and awful pretensions. Only thorough familiarity with that prophecy will enable any one to have a clear conception of the scope and real meaning of the thirteenth and seventeenth chapters of this Book. We may therefore quote the following: *Dan.* vii. 17-28, "These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth." (They are thus of totally different origin and character from those of the kingdom of heaven.) "But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever. Then I desired to know the truth concerning the fourth beast, which was diverse from all of them, exceeding terrible . . . and concerning the ten horns that were on his head, and the other (horn) which came up . . . even that horn which had eyes, and a mouth that spake great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given unto the saints of the Most High: and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.

Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all the kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. And as for the ten horns, out of this kingdom shall ten kings arise; and another shall arise after them; and he shall be diverse from the former, and he shall put down three kings. And he shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High: and he shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and half a time. But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High: His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him."

On this wonderful prophecy we may observe:—

First. That the terrible fourth kingdom is most certainly the Roman, or last of the four kingdoms symbolised—those of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome.

Secondly. The ten horns are expressly said to represent ten kingdoms which are to arise out of the Roman empire. Whether we are to take this number literally, or for a considerable number, we are not prepared to affirm. In the corresponding prophecy of the great image, the ten toes are said to represent ten kingdoms; but, as the toes were naturally ten, we might suppose the kingdoms, on that account rather than with a view to numerical accuracy, represented as ten, or just such a number of parts of the Roman empire as would correspond to the number of the toes of the image. If this be a correct view of the one prophecy, the same view ought to be taken of the other: that is to say, as the same kingdoms are intended in both prophecies, the same number must be given in both; if exactly ten is meant in the one case, exactly ten must be meant in the other; and if a considerable number, possibly about ten, in the former, then a considerable, and no precisely exact number, in the latter.

Thirdly. The very peculiar horn, called "a little one," ver. 8, is expressly said to arise after the ten. We have thus a very important comparative date which must be kept in view in the identification of this horn; only we must, as in all such cases, regard the rise of it to refer, not to the whole period which it may have taken to rise to its full development, but to the time at which it appeared in its full development. Being called "a little horn," this remark might seem

inapplicable, as it may be supposed to grow afterwards to surpassing greatness. This may be so. Still, it is to be viewed as sufficiently fully grown before it could thus wax greater, and that it might be able so to wax very great.

Fourthly. This little horn, though rising out of the beast and among the original horns of the beast, is to be viewed as vastly differing from the beast and his horns. Not only is "his look more stout than his fellows," but he is said to do what none of them is said to do, even to "make war with the saints and prevail against them . . . to speak great words against the Most High, and wear out the saints of the Most High . . . and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and half a time." The whole of this description is exactly that of the beast with the wounded and restored head, the beast which thus was, and is not, and shall come. There cannot be a real shadow of a doubt as to this. The symbol of a little horn is different; the reality of the power, with its terrible doings in relation to God and His people, is the same. The beast of the thirteenth and seventeenth chapters of the Book must be looked for in full development, though not in the extent of his dominion, not before, but after the division of the Roman empire into ten parts, at least into a considerable number of parts. Pagan Rome, then, cannot possibly be meant. Nor can the kingdoms into which that empire is divided be possibly intended. We must, therefore, look for a totally different kingdom from all these, amongst these, which shall cast down certain of these, which shall rise some time after these, which shall affect a superhuman greatness, in some way magnify himself above and against the Most High, and, for three years and a-half, or forty-two months, or 1260 days or years, fearfully persecute the saints of that period, and therefore in reality the Christians or true followers of Christ, and which shall then be judged, whilst his dominion shall be taken away, consumed and destroyed unto the end. Then the kingdom shall be given to the saints of the Most High, the faithful followers of Jesus Christ, and that for ever, even for ever and ever.

Fifthly. If the Papal kingdom be not that of this little horn, and of the beast wounded to death and then restored, not by God, but by Satan, to new and terrible life, we may safely say that no such kingdom has appeared throughout the course of European history.

7. *Vers. 12-14.* "And the ten horns that thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but they receive authority as kings at one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and they give their power and authority to the beast. These shall war against the Lamb,

and the Lamb shall overcome them, for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they that are with Him are called and chosen and faithful."

(1) "*And the ten horns that thou sawest are ten kings,*" or kingdoms, just the ten or considerable number of kingdoms into which the Roman empire is to be divided, or which are to rise out of it. "*Which have received no kingdom as yet,*"—the kingdoms are still in the future; Pagan Rome yet exists; this very beast "is not," but "shall come." Neither heads nor horns are crowned. The seven heads have passed or are passing away. This beast, not yet come, is really the eighth. The ten horns are uncrowned, but will be crowned in due time. Beast and horns rise about the same time. "*They receive authority as kings, with the beast, for one hour.*" So the Revised Version; but we are assured this is altogether wrong. In the Greek we have no preposition, no "for"; and it should not have been put in. The expression seems to be simply Hebraistic, "one hour," "one time," "at an hour," or "at the same time."

This agrees with what we have just said, and which we have found to be implied in the prophecy of Daniel. In Daniel the little horn, which corresponds to the beast of this place, is indeed said to rise after the ten horns. This implies no real contradiction, as the horns are strictly speaking the horns of the beast in its first or pagan form; and so secular kingdoms which are to rise out of the secular empire. In other words, the beast of the thirteenth chapter represents the secular kingdom with the ten secular kingdoms connected with it, apart altogether from what followed, namely, the wound and the cure; so that the cure might either follow or precede the rise of the ten kingdoms. Daniel says it followed. The same seems implied in what is here added: "These have one mind, and they give their power and authority to the beast"; all, then, rose about the same time. The idea of great and long-continued kingdoms receiving authority for one hour seems simply ridiculous. We do not say that the Revised Version does not render grammatically by "for one hour." The simple question is, Seeing this appears perfectly absurd, may not another equally grammatical and more suitable, however less common, rendering be made?

We think Alford, whilst opposing it, has warranted that which we have already given, namely, "at the same time." He says, "*one hour*" (*i.e.*, during the space of one hour: just as *ἡμίωρον*, in chap. viii. 1, is during the space of half an hour. Some, *e.g.* Vitranga and Elliott, have upheld the meaning, for *μίαν ὥραν μετὰ*, of 'at one and the same time with.' From the use of *ποίαν ὥραν*, in chap. iii. 3, we might concede such usage to be within the bare limits of possibility, though

even thus the *μίαν μετά*, for 'one and the same with,' is a hard saying. But we are not to inquire, in our exegesis, what *may* possibly *be*, but what probably *is*. And I venture to say that, but for a preconceived opinion, no one would ever have thought of any other meaning for these words than the ordinary one, 'for the space of an hour.' And thus accordingly we will take them, as signifying some definite space, unknown to us, thus designated: analogous in position to the *ὀλίγον* above." This seems very specious, yet very far from strong. Our translation is conceded as at least possible. Vitringa, a host in himself, has accepted it. We need the help of no preconceived opinion to make us favour it.

Adopting that of Alford and the Revised Version "for one hour," we hold that the whole sentence is simply made absurd. Like Alford, we shall hold by the probable, that thus we may escape the absurd. Here, as in some other places, Alford should have remembered what he says of the loose Greek of this Book. However, the example of a like construction which he has given, Rev. iii. 3, not only requires all the concession which he makes, but seems most clearly to prove that our translation, the translation which seems alone consistent with any real sense, is in perfect conformity with the actual usage of John, who at Rev. iii. 3 uses no preposition; and yet if we do, as we may, supply one, it must be, not "for," as Alford contends, but "at," as we hold to be not only admissible, but alone to be admitted. This is quite sufficient. We repeat, the idea of great and long-continued kingdoms receiving authority to reign together "for one hour" is more than absurd, however the words may be taken figuratively of a longer period.

(2) "*These have one mind, and they give their power and authority to the beast.*" Influenced by the antichristian power or king, the king or kingdom which takes the place of the Roman emperor or empire, they all act in subserviency to his designs, they place themselves under his authority and act as his vassals. All these secular kingdoms virtually become the one kingdom of this antichristian power, which we hold, and think we have proved, to be no other than the Papal kingdom.

(3) "*These shall war against the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them.*" Antichrist ever wars, and cannot but war, against Christ. And so long as these secular kingdoms are allied and subordinate to his kingdom, this war is sure to go on. It may be, it has been, very bloody. The poor saints of the kingdom have suffered for ages at the hand of these antichristian kingdoms. In the end the Lamb must and shall prevail.

(4) "*For He is Lord of lords and King of kings ; and they that are with Him (are) called, chosen and faithful.*" Both Captain and soldiers are prepared for final victory. No earthly power, no power even from the abyss, can possibly triumph eventually over "the King of kings and Lord of lords." We have been led to treat of this war and its final result already, though under a different figure. We shall have to treat of it again. At present we shall be content with the bare statement of fact. When the battle is the Lord's, we need not fear the end. Still, this great Captain is not to fight single-handed. His "called and chosen and faithful" soldiers must come to His help,—*"the help of the Lord against the mighty."* He and His great and noble army will triumph gloriously ; and all who oppose must be utterly overthrown.

8. *Vers. 15-17.* "And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the harlot sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the harlot, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and shall burn her utterly with fire. For God did put in their hearts to do His mind, and to come to one mind, and to give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God should be accomplished."

(1) "*The waters which thou sawest, where the harlot sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.*" We must remember this woman is also a city, Babylon the Great, on the banks of the Euphrates, whose waters are here said to symbolise all these peoples, which seem simply to be the kingdoms just referred to. We have treated pretty fully of this already. That these kingdoms are intended seems evident from what is said of the ten horns which represent them. They do not remain devoted to her service. They change ; and, instead of loving, they hate her.

(2) "*And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the harlot, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and shall burn her utterly with fire.*" They shall at last treat her according to her real and most abominable, and even most cruel, character. According to the Revised Version, the beast as well as the ten horns are said so to do. Alford takes the same view, also translating "and the beast," and not, as the Authorised Version, "upon the beast." We have been so accustomed to regard the woman and the beast as indissolubly connected, that this seems inconsistent with the whole representation. This close connection, or even identity, seems implied in the words which follow,—that "God did put in their hearts," evidently, of the horns alone, and not

of the beast, "to do His mind, and to come to one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast," absolutely proving that the horns alone are meant, and not the beast also, which could not give his kingdom to himself, "until the words of God should be accomplished." During all that time they were to be of one mind with the beast, and to give their kingdom to him; and then, as said, if the horns are regarded as "on the beast," they change their mind, withdraw their kingdoms from the beast, and so from the woman also, and hate her, make her desolate and destroy her. All this seems clearly to demonstrate that the correct reading is *ἐνὶ* and not *καὶ*, "horns *on* the beast," not "horns *and* the beast." The truth of this prophetic statement, if we take the woman to represent the antichristian or corrupt Christian Church, might be fully illustrated by the facts of history. Ever since the Reformation, one or other of these kingdoms has, whether hating her or not, been making her desolate by depriving her of what she has highly valued, but which has been treated as superfluous wealth. England, Germany, France, Italy, even Spain, have all so done. Doubtless the prediction is not yet even half fulfilled. Of late, as often before, the hatred spoken of has been boldly and vehemently expressed. The celebrated saying of Gambetta, "The clergy, that is, the enemy," gave expression to the hatred of many a heart besides his own.

(3) "*For God did put in their hearts to do His mind, and to come to one mind, and to give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God should be accomplished.*" Never were so many kingdoms so united in obedience to any one power. They might often be at war with one another; and yet, "till God's words were accomplished," they were thus united under one mysterious mighty head. They "gave their kingdom to the beast." He claimed to have a Divine right to reign over them; and they yielded to his claim, or acknowledged his authority. We need not say, all history testifies to the truth of this. How greatly is this authority claimed and acknowledged even now, however truly and most remarkably the prophetic words have been verified by the deprivation of all direct temporal power and dominion, by the removal of the temporal or royal crown from the long-crowned head!

9. *Ver.* 18. "And the woman whom thou sawest is the great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth."

Almost all regard this as a direct allusion to Rome as the universally ruling power; some, to Pagan Rome, and a greater number to Rome Papal. We have given what we deem the clearest evidence that the former cannot possibly be intended. Paganism

in its first form had long passed away. Paganism in its second or restored form, or in the corrupt and paganised Church, is here assuredly alluded to. The woman has her name upon her brow, *BABYLON THE GREAT*,—the great city elsewhere likened to Sodom and Egypt and apostate and persecuting Jerusalem. The beast on which the woman sits is that of wounded and revived Paganism, or of the Pagan empire raised from the dead, or of the kingdom of Antichrist. The city, then, is Babylon the Great, and the kings or kingdoms over which she reigns are those symbolised by the many waters of the Euphrates, the mystic river on which the mystic city is built. As again and again said, the woman referred to is to be contrasted with the woman clothed in heavenly light, and that as no other can be. The former is the fallen Church of Christ, the false wife of the Lamb, as the latter is the true and faithful Church, the free and faithful Bride, the Lamb's Wife. The former is professedly the Holy City, the Jerusalem of God, but really the unholy city, Babylon the Great; the latter alone is the true and holy and new Jerusalem of Christ and of God. If Rome, then, is here meant, it cannot be the material city, nor can it be the city viewed as the capital and representative of the Pagan empire, but solely as the representative of the Papal Kingdom, or rather Empire as over the kingdoms of the earth. The Papal and the Papal alone can be said to realise the varied and most remarkable descriptions given here and elsewhere in this Book.

We may here quote from Alford:—"Everything here is plain. The '*septem urbs alta jugis toto quæ præsidet orbi*' (Propert) can be but one, and that one *ROME*. The pres. part., *ἡ ἔχουσα*, points to the time when the words were uttered, and to the dominion then subsisting. It has already been seen, that the prophecy regards Rome Pagan and Papal, but, from the figure of an harlot and the very nature of the predictions themselves, more the latter than the former." If Pagan Rome, then, "what appropriateness in the use of all the Scripture imagery, long familiar to God's people, of spiritual fornication? And if this were so, where is the contest with the Lamb, . . . where the fulfilment of any the least portion of the prophecy? . . . For us who believe the prophecy is to be fulfilled, what was Rome then, is Rome now. Her fornications and abominations, as well as her power and pride, are matter of history and of present fact: and we look for her destruction to come, as we believe it is rapidly coming, by the means and in the manner here foretold." Alford and others appear to put far more weight on the use of the present participle, "which reigneth, or hath kingdom over," than

it will here bear. They suppose the reference to be to the time of John, or to that in which the words were written. This they have no right to assume. The vision was before the eyes of John. The angel explains. The whole vision belonged, not to the present but to the future. John is thus to be viewed as living in the future, as made present to him. The beast, the kingdoms, the woman, form one group in the future, but spoken of as present. This future woman, this great city of mystic Babylon, was described as sitting on the very waters representing these kings or kingdoms, over which she is said to reign. The angel speaks as in the present. So the present is used of the same time in this very context. Of the beast it is said that he "was, and is not." Alford might as well insist that "is not," being the present, refers to the time of John, though this he certainly would not do. When this prophecy is thus far fulfilled, the woman spoken of may be said to be "the great city Babylon, that reigneth over the kingdoms of the earth." The paganised Church, certainly the Church of Rome, with the false king at its head, did thus reign, continues so far thus to reign, has lost much of the greatness and power here spoken of, has been to no small extent hated by these very kingdoms, and is destined to fall and to perish, as here declared. The symbol is complex. The woman is the paganised Church. The beast is the restored or paganised empire. The Church or spiritual kingdom has its spiritual head. The political empire has its political head. The head of the spiritual, as Vicar of Christ or representative of the King of kings, claims to have dominion over the whole earth, and therefore to be also the head of the political empire, or of all the nations of the world. For a time these kingdoms gave their power to him, virtually treated him as their political as well as spiritual head. Thus each kingdom has a head, and that head the same in both. Though Christ said His kingdom was not of this world, this great usurper claims first to be over the kingdom of heaven, or not of this world, and further, nay, even as such, to have authority over all inferior kingdoms or the kingdoms of the earth. There is no contradiction in this. The same holds in all Protestant states in which the State and the Church are virtually one, and in which the King is head of the state, and as such, according to the constitution of the country, the head of the Church. The difference is very simple. The Pope is the head of the kingdom of Christ, and therefore of the kingdoms of the earth. The Protestant king is the head of a kingdom of the earth, and therefore of the kingdom of Christ within His dominions.

VIII.

CHAPTERS XVIII., XIX., XX.

THESE three chapters, like the preceding three, are more closely connected than at first sight they may to some appear. They relate to the fall of the mystic Babylon, which had been more than once already alluded to ; to the great war which issued in the defeat of the antichristian king and so in the fall of Babylon, the capital and representative of the antichristian kingdom ; and to the rise of the Christian Church from its long-continued state of depression and persecution to all the prosperity, blessedness and glory of the Millennial era.

I.

CHAPTER XVIII.

VISION OF THE DESTRUCTION OF BABYLON, OR THE FALL OF THE ANTICHRISTIAN KINGDOM.

1. *Vers. 1-3.* "After these things I saw another angel coming down out of heaven, having great authority ; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried with a mighty voice, saying, Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great, and is become a habitation of demons, and a hold of every unclean spirit, and a hold of every unclean and hateful bird. For of the wine of the wrath of her fornication all the nations have drunk ; and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth waxed rich by the power of her wantonness."

(1) "*After these things I saw another angel coming down out of heaven, having great authority ; and the earth was lightened with his glory.*" These words merely imply that this vision followed that of the preceding chapter relating to the mystic woman or mystic city, Babylon representing the corrupt or fallen Church or kingdom of Christ. As already said, Pagan Rome had long fallen

before this mystic city was built on that mystic Euphrates whose waters are expressly said to symbolise many nations, kingdoms, and tongues. Babylon, accordingly, can be no other than, not the literal city, but the mystic capital of Papal Rome, or the corrupt Church of Rome. The angel is here introduced as coming directly from God, God now sitting in solemn judgment, as we found in chap. xi. 18, chap. xiv. 7, and chap. xvi. 19, and thus as coming forth to declare the judgment or doom of the great city. He is therefore declared to have great authority, to be clothed with the highest dignity, and to possess such a glory as filled the whole earth with its light. This description would naturally suggest his identity with Jesus Christ. However, the more correct idea would seem rather that of his highly representative character as commissioned to act instead of Him.

(2) "*And he cried with a mighty voice, saying, Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great, and is become the habitation of demons, and a hold of every unclean spirit, and a hold of every unclean and hateful bird.*" This is the language of prophecy, and not of historical fact, as is clearly proved by the call to come out of her which immediately follows. So far indeed she had fallen, or lost a large part, even a tenth, and had also been divided into three parts, whatever that might mean. This proclamation relates to what still remained and was doomed to total destruction. The present tense is used to express absolutely certain fulfilment. Taken in connection with previous announcements, this declaration implies comparative nearness also. The description given is in keeping with Scripture allusion to cities utterly overthrown, or places of any kind reduced to perfect desolation. It is of decided consequence to keep in mind the fact that Babylon here is no real or material city at all; or that ancient Babylon is here mystically used of that city which stands related to the antichristian Church as the New Jerusalem stands to the Christian Church or to the true Israel of God. It is therefore described in the very terms in which the literal city would be described, or, the results of the fall of mystic Babylon are set forth as, in ancient prophecy, were the results of the fall of the literal Babylon or of the fall of some other city doomed to like desolation. Those, accordingly, greatly err, who so identify this mystic capital of Antichrist with the literal capital of the Papal Church, even the material city of Rome, as to lead them to expect a literal fulfilment of the desolation here predicted. For instance, the merchants and merchandise spoken of might literally be associated with ancient Babylon or Tyre, and yet might by no means be so associated with

the great mystic city here intended. To look for some spiritual parallel, or some exact mystic meaning of the very many details here given, would be simply to seek the living among the dead, and to violate what we deem the plainest principles of symbolism.

In the interpretation, then, of the greater part of this chapter, let us remember that the symbol is described rather than the thing symbolised; whilst we are left to infer the greatness and the completeness of the destruction of the mystic city which is not described from the greatness and completeness of the destruction of the literal city which is described. In Isaiah xxi. 9 we have, as here, the prophetic past or present used for the historical future: "And he answered and said, Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the images of her gods are broken unto the ground." And so Jer. li. 8, "Babylon is suddenly fallen, and destroyed"; also, Isaiah xliii. 19-21, "And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans' pride, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation. . . . But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and ostriches shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there." Thus the doom of ancient Babylon as pronounced by Old Testament prophecy is set forth here as really the doom of mystic Babylon.

(3) "*For of the wine of the wrath of her fornication all the nations have drunk, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth waxed rich by the power of her wantonness.*" On the whole we prefer the Authorised to the Revised Version—"have drunk of," to "are fallen by" the wine, etc. The nations have been intoxicated and corrupted by her. On this account she must be destroyed. She ought to have acted as the one and only Bride and Wife of the Lamb, the one and only Head of the kingdom of heaven, her one and only true Husband, and not as the bride or wife of any one or every one of the kings of the earth. This may prove their wickedness and perversion of mind, but it is used to prove her baseness and ill-desert. She is thus worthy of her doom. Through her, too, the merchants of the earth were enriched. Both kings and merchants are said to be of the earth, because they belong to the unconverted world, to those who have not the seal of God upon their foreheads—to those, in fact, who profess to be Christians, but who are unrenewed in heart and life, and so really belong to the world, whose capital is here spoken of as if already fallen. Her pernicious

and paganising influence penetrates every nation or kingdom with which she is associated. On this passage Wordsworth has said, "The language of this chapter, concerning the fall of Papal Rome, is derived from that of Hebrew prophecy, describing the fall of Babylon. It is here foretold that Rome will become, what Babylon is, utterly reduced to a state of desolation. Here, then, is another proof that these Apocalyptic prophecies do not concern *ancient heathen* Rome; and that they were not fulfilled when Rome was captured by the Goths." This would seem clearly to imply that the material city Rome is to be regarded as the mystical material city Babylon, coming, in fact, to occupy literally the place, and destined to suffer literally the doom, of Babylon. If so, Rome, though now no longer the capital of the kingdom of the Pope, but the capital of the king or kingdom of united Italy, has yet the doom of unmitigated desolation hanging over it, and can never become the prosperous capital of a prosperous Christian people. This is a very great mistake. Material Rome, though long the capital of the temporal kingdom of the Pope, or of "The States of the Church," must not be identified with the great city of this Book, mystic Babylon, the capital of the antichristian empire, and built, not as Wordsworth and others would affirm, on the banks or waters of the Tiber, but on the banks or waters of the great mystical river Euphrates, whose waters are symbolic of multitudes and nations and peoples. Rome, now restored to its proper place in the rising kingdom of long down-trodden, and now, we trust, ever emancipated, Italy, may, under the influence of a pure apostolic gospel, and inhabited by a more Christian people than ever dwelt within its bounds, become, as we would most sincerely and earnestly pray, more truly great and glorious, prosperous and happy than she ever was under her former potentates, pagan and papal. The mystical capital of Antichrist is no more a material or local city than is the mystical capital of Christ and the true Israel of God. Not Rome, but Romanism, must perish.

2. *Vers.* 4-8. "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come forth, my people, out of her, that ye have no fellowship with her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues: for her sins have reached even unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Render unto her even as she rendered, and double (unto her) the double according to her works: in the cup which she mingled, mingle unto her double. How much soever she glorified herself, and waxed wanton, so much give her of torment and mourning: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall in no wise see mourning. Therefore in one day

shall her plagues come, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire; for strong is the Lord God which judged her."

(1) "*And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come forth, my people, out of her.*" The use of the words, "My people," would naturally suggest that this voice was that either of God or of Christ. It has been said, that "the long poetical lamentation" which follows is against this, and that therefore we must suppose an angel highly representative of Christ or of God. There is certainly some force in this, and yet perhaps not sufficient to require the abandonment of so very natural an inference. However, the main point is the call itself—"Come forth, my people, out of her." In passing, we may remark that this call seems clearly to prove the correctness of our view, that we must by no means identify mystic Babylon with the literal city Rome; as we cannot by any possibility hold that these true Christians are called upon to come forth from so insignificant a place, and not rather out of the great city which represents the whole corrupt Church here intended. When it is maintained that the Roman Church is alluded to under the fearful figures or symbols of a large part of this Book, the question is often asked, Are there, then, no Christians within the pale of a Church so condemned and so doomed? The answer is very simple. That Church was gradually perverted from being the true Church: so that much pertaining to the latter is yet retained, even such an amount of truth, for instance in the Apostles' Creed, as may be used by the Holy Spirit for the conversion of many who may never see it to be a duty to separate themselves from errors and corruptions which they may deeply deplore.

Besides, we cannot determine how far true Christians may, along with the knowledge of "the truth as it is in Jesus," entertain errors of the gravest description, and follow practices which all enlightened Christians would strongly condemn. How many are there who may be pronounced vastly better than their Church or than their creed! And how many are there whose creed and Church are vastly better than themselves! For many ages the Bible was a concealed book. To all intents the Book of God and of Christ was banished by this most mysterious Church from all countries despotically ruled by it; and thus multitudes were deprived of the divinely appointed means of detecting the accumulated errors of ages, and of advancing in that divine knowledge which would have constrained millions to come forth, as this voice from heaven calls upon all true Christians to do. It is to be remembered, also, that the too early division of this Church into clergy and laity, with a

really impassable gulf between them, eventually so increased as to concentrate all power and authority in the former, to convert it and it alone into the Church, to allow that Church to wield a most crushing and despotic power over the people constituting the real Church, and to organise itself into the most mysterious, most mighty, most far-seeing and far-reaching, most subtle and most deceptive power, which this world has ever known, and which many have been led, as these wondrous chapters seem fully to warrant them, to call "the masterpiece of Satan." In this way many in every age, whilst inspired with sincere love to Christ, may have been deceived and kept in bondage by a subtle and despotic priesthood. All instruction, earlier and later, would inspire veneration for the supposed one and only Church of Christ. Taught to expect imperfections everywhere, they would be led to tolerate what they could not but condemn. Accustomed to hear all other Churches reviled as heretical, and even accursed, they would cling to their own as the very mother of all who could possibly be saved.

Further, since the Reformation, and through the permeating influence of the Reformed Churches, the spirit of persecution has been less fierce, and the spirit of liberty and of liberality more general and more intense. Even if ever so desirous, this Church cannot persecute and put to death, as in former times. The whole anti-christian system, though essentially unchanged, has undergone very considerable external modification. The very presence of a goodly number of such people as are here addressed, nay, of many whose works of benevolence praise them beyond their own gates, inspires no little respect for what might otherwise be hated or treated with contempt. The more Christian the character or the more Christlike the spirit, the more refined the manners and the more commendable the morals, of those summoned to come forth, the more highly do they exalt the Church or kingdom here doomed to destruction, and the less likely are the many to obey. In fact, persons of great excellence, whether real or only apparent, can have no idea of the evil which they do to themselves and to others, it may be even to the world at large, by their connection with some erroneous system or corrupt community. Most appropriate, then, and important, is this call from heaven. Good were it for the world that all acted accordingly, and that not only as associated with the corrupt and corrupting Church in question, but also as in any way commending and upholding evil, of whatever description. Other Churches may more or less resemble this, and have not a little evil in common with this. The call is to them as truly as to those

addressed from the great and central throne, "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be to you a Father, and ye shall be to Me sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty," are words, like those before us, addressed from heaven to all Christians on earth, and revealing a principle on which all ought to act, when connected with evil of any kind or degree.

The call here given corresponds with that given to captive Israel in relation to ancient Babylon,—Isaiah xlviii. 20, "Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans. . . . Say ye, The Lord hath redeemed His servant Jacob"; Jer. li. 6, "Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and save every man his life; be not cut off in her iniquity: for it is the time of the Lord's vengeance; He will render unto her a recompense. Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunk her wine; therefore the nations are mad,"—ver. 13, "O thou that dwellest upon many waters, abundant in treasures, thine end is come, the measure of thy covetousness,"—ver. 24, "And I will render unto Babylon and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea all their evil that they have done in Zion in your sight, saith the Lord,"—ver. 45, "My people, go ye out of the midst of her, and save yourselves every man from the fierce anger of the Lord." Just as captive Israel was thus called upon to flee from ancient Babylon, the like captive followers of Christ are here called upon to come forth out of the mystic Babylon, the apostate Church, the corrupt kingdom of Antichrist. Many of the Jews may have so prospered, so risen in the world, so become unwilling to encounter the difficulties and dangers of their return to their own land, as to be unwilling to escape from their degrading captivity; and so they are told of the danger of remaining, and thus of being certainly involved in the iniquity and doom of the great city. Remaining there, they need not think to enjoy the protection of God, or to escape the terrible destruction which would assuredly come. So, in the case of Christians who might allow conscience to sleep, continue to conform to much that they saw to be wrong, and still adhere to the Church of idolatry and corruption, the call from heaven sets forth the sin and the danger of remaining where they are and as they are. This call should come to all Christian hearts, and lead Christians of all classes to study the sacred volume, to part with every form of evil, and to seek the full restoration of the Christian Church to all the purity, unworldliness and spirituality of apostolic times, or rather, to rise higher still, even to a state of the highest

conformity to the Divine will as revealed in the New Testament, or to the perfect example of Jesus Christ. Hence it is added,—

(2) "*That ye have no fellowship with her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues: for her sins have reached even unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.*" Ah! It is hard to live in a sinful community without partaking in its sins. Conformity to the world has been the sin, the danger, the disgrace, the source of error and corruption and decay and death, to the people of God of every age and from the beginning. It is the greatest source everywhere in our own day—sins must issue in plagues. The plagues of the sixteenth chapter are here specially referred to. "*Her sins have reached unto heaven.*" Let any one contrast the whole history of so-called Christian Europe with the history of the apostolic Church retaining all her purity and power to the present time, and then he may form some idea of the fearful character here given of the apostate Church. What monsters have professed to be, and have been held by millions to be, the Vicars of Christ and the heads of the kingdom of heaven! What heathen morals and superstitions, what endless strifes and crimes, what civil despotism and religious persecution, during what have been miscalled "the ages of faith"! "*And God hath remembered her iniquities.*" He has done so for centuries. She has suffered for centuries. Her iniquities are remembered still. Every nation of Europe, which has adhered to her antichristian system, has partaken of her plagues. Only as her sins are forsaken can these plagues be escaped.

(3) "*Render unto her even as she rendered, and double (unto her) the double according to her works: in the cup which she mingled, mingle unto her double.*" These are not the words of the true and long-oppressed Church of Jesus Christ; but of the Divine and righteous Judge, pronouncing the final sentence, and calling on those concerned to execute it to the full. To render double may seem unjust and extravagant. However, the man who steals any sum of money certainly forfeits far more than double that sum. The words are expressive of public justice, and not of private or personal revenge. All patience has been exhausted; the day of judgment has come. The Authorised Version, "reward her even as she rewarded you," would imply that Christians were thus to act. By removing the "you," the Revised Version suggests that the address is not necessarily to Christians at all, but to the appointed ministers of retribution, who may be the very kings and peoples whom she has long corrupted and misled. This seems correct, though only through her fall can the true Church rise.

(4) "*How much soever she glorified herself, and waxed wanton, so much give her of torment and mourning: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall in no wise see mourning. Therefore in one day shall her plagues come, death and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire.*" Not only is she punished for her cruel treatment of the saints of God; she is dealt with according to her real character, her godless pride and self-sufficiency, her worldly self-indulgence and manifold vice. She is destined to the most awful suffering. She is doomed to mourning, and widowhood, and death; and that because, in heart as well as life, she is altogether self-seeking, self-exalting, self-dependent; ever glorifying herself, never glorifying God. Like ancient Babylon, she is a queen, the very queen of heaven. Like Pagan Rome, she is the Eternal City, destined to no widowhood and to no sorrow. "Therefore," even on this very account, even "*in one day shall her plagues come.*" Her expectations shall utterly fail. Her terrible doom shall suddenly come. "*She shall be burned with fire,*" finally and absolutely destroyed. The words are figurative, but not the less fearful. As already said, we are very far from applying them to the material city, Rome. Nor would we take the expression "*in one day*" literally, of the entire city or entire antichristian kingdom. We have seen how one-tenth of the city is said to have fallen after the ascension of the risen witnesses. The same city is said to be divided into three parts. Blow after blow will fall suddenly. Between these successive blows centuries may elapse;—centuries have elapsed. Just as Christ has many comings to individual Christians, He comes again and again to judge and deal with corrupt communities. In all cases He comes when least expected. He executes judgment after judgment, and each suddenly, as if "*in one day.*"

(5) "*For strong is the Lord God which judged her.*" How strong she has appeared! How strong did ancient Babylon appear! How mighty and lasting did Pagan Rome seem to herself, and to all who thought of her conquests! "And they worshipped the beast saying, Who is like unto the beast? and who is able to war with him?" Ah! The judgment has been pronounced. "The voice from heaven" uses no vain words. That judgment shall be executed. She cannot defend herself. Her Judge is almighty: she cannot resist His arm. The judgment spoken of is that of Daniel (chap. vii. 26), "The judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and destroy it unto the end"; and, as again and again pointed out, that of Rev. xi. 18, "And the time

of the dead to be judged, and to give their reward to Thy servants the prophets . . . and to destroy them that destroy the earth."

3. *Vers. 9-13.* "And the kings of the earth, who committed fornication and lived wantonly with her, shall weep and wail over her, when they look upon the smoke of her burning, standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city ! for in one hour is thy judgment come. And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, for no man buyeth their merchandise any more ; merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and every vessel of ivory, and every vessel made of most precious wood and of brass and iron and marble ; and cinnamon, and spice, and incense, and ointment, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and cattle, and sheep ; and (merchandise) of horses and chariots and slaves ; and souls of men."

All who share in her greatness, the kings and merchants of the earth, men of the world professedly one with her, "stand afar off" at her fall. They lament over the loss to themselves ; but they will not come to her help. Nor are they encouraged to do so, as her ruin comes unexpectedly. The world laments over the fall of what may be a source of greatest evil to the kingdom of God. Much of what is here so powerfully expressed has perplexed the minds of commentators, as seemingly applicable to neither Pagan nor Papal Rome. One mistake leads to another, and often to difficulties which would never arise. It has been so here. By identifying material Rome with mystical Babylon, no material city at all, they have been at the greatest loss to find how these words can be shown to be appropriate. They, at least certain of them, have inferred the literal fall and the actual burning of the material city. They have thought also of a city of great material wealth, commerce, and the like. They can thus see no real parallel between the city as here described and the present state, or possible, not to say probable, future of the city which they believe to be intended.

No wonder ! The description proceeds upon the simple fact that the antichristian Church or kingdom may be, as it here actually is, fitly symbolised by ancient Babylon. In describing the character, the doom, and the results of the overthrow of the corrupt immaterial or spiritual city, what more natural than to make use of the material city thus selected as a symbol, and to give a description more suitable to the character, the doom, and the results of the fall of the city symbolising than of the city symbolised ? The very selection of Babylon as a symbol or type required the description to be of

Babylon. The words here used, accordingly, are such as we find used of Babylon or of Tyre, or of any such city, by the prophets of the Old Testament. Even with this in view, we are apt to confound what is said of the symbol with what is meant in the thing symbolised,—for instance, what is said literally of the literal fall of Babylon with what is intended of the fall and final destruction of the literal corrupt Church, the kingdom of Antichrist, between which and a material city there may be an impressive analogy, but no possible identity.

To illustrate this, and to show once more the importance of keeping apart the symbols and the things symbolised, the confounding of which has been a source of the greatest amount of error in the interpretation of this Book, we may quote the following from Alford: "The description which follows is perhaps drawn, in its poetic and descriptive features, from the relation of Rome to the world which then was, rather than from its relation at the future time depicted in the prophecy." Here a picture of the present is supposed to be used as a prophetic picture of the future. What so unlikely as that the future should so exactly resemble the present? No wonder that it should be found so hard to discover the fulfilment of such a prophecy! No wonder if such a supposed prophecy should prove its own falsity! Hence it is added, "But it must not for a moment be denied, that the character of this lamentation throws a shade of obscurity over the interpretation, otherwise so plain from the explanation given in chap. xvii. 18." Here another mistake, and that too generally held, that of identifying material Rome with mystic and immaterial Babylon. "The difficulty, however, is not confined to the application of the prophecy to Rome Papal, but extends over the application of it to Rome *at all*, which last is determined for us by the solution given at chap. xvii. 18." A great mistake, as we have just said, and as we have shown when treating of the words. "For Rome never has been, and from its very position never could be, a great commercial city." But could not a great commercial city, such as here described, be used to symbolise a great mystical city of spiritual commerce? "I leave this difficulty unsolved, merely requesting the student to bear in mind its true limits, and not to charge it exclusively on that interpretation which only shares it with any other possible one."

The difficulty is created by Alford himself, and all who, like him, make the material city Rome, and not the immaterial or mystic Babylon, the representative of the corrupt Church intended. Not

the interpretation, as Alford says, but the misinterpretation, which he and many others hold, of chap. xvii. 18, leads to all this difficulty. He adds, "The main features of the description are taken from that of the destruction of and lamentation over Tyre, in Ezekiel xxvii., to which city they were strictly applicable. And possibly it may be said that they are also applicable to the Church which has wedded herself to the pride of the earth and its luxuries." Nearer the truth, but not quite correct. In describing the fall of such a worldly city as Tyre or Babylon, we have a description as applicable to the fall of the great corrupt Church, as would a description of Tyre or Babylon or both combined be applicable to the Church itself. If Babylon, though used symbolically of the antichristian Church, was not, in external features, the least like that Church, why should the fall of Babylon, though used symbolically of the fall of the same Church, require to be in any way like that fall? "But certainly, as has been observed, the details of this mercantile lamentation far more nearly suit London than Rome at any assignable period of her history." Most assuredly they do, and ought. London is more like Babylon and Tyre combined, than ever was Rome; and it so happens that, in this chapter, the prophetic description of both is used to set forth the fall of the great mystic city, more impressively than would have the prophetic description of Babylon alone. The same might be said of Liverpool as of London. A prophetic description of it, and of its fall, might have answered the purpose of a most striking symbolical, but not literal, description of what was of a totally different nature, even the character and fall of a most corrupt spiritual or religious community.

The reference to "the souls of men," as a part of the merchandise intended, gives us a glimpse at the true character of the thing symbolised. Of course, no more than "persons" may be meant, and then all must be literally taken and thus connected with the symbol alone. But sometimes in this Book we find a clause introduced so as to give the key to the interpretation of the symbolical description. Thus, in chap. ix. 4, "And it was said unto them," the locusts, "that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree," all their natural food, "but only such men as have not the seal of God on their foreheads," thus giving a key to the whole vision. So a like key may be found in this brief expression, "And souls of men," as if it had been said, Not these things of mere merchandise are meant, but that of the very "souls of men," that of what is spiritual, and so beyond all price, as never to be rightly bought or sold. However, we would

not press this, as possibly persons bought and sold as slaves may be intended. Be this as it may, we may simply add that in this place we have the clearest possible proof, if proof should yet be necessary, that the material city Rome cannot be meant by the great city Babylon, but simply that city viewed as symbolising the whole kingdom of Antichrist—namely, in the fact that, as Alford suggests almost the same thing, “this feature in the prophecy,” that of the kings beholding the smoke of the burning city, “is an objection to the literal understanding of its details. It can hardly be imagined that the kings should bodily stand and look as described, seeing that no combination of events contemplated in the prophecy has brought them together as yet.” No. And why suppose such a gathering? These kings are in their own countries, and yet they see the smoke of the burning city, as they could not possibly do of Rome or of any other material city.

4. *Vers. 14-17.* “And the fruits which thy soul lusted after are gone from thee, and all things that were dainty and sumptuous are perished from thee, and (men) shall find them no more at all. The merchants of these things, who were made rich by her, shall stand afar off, for the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning; saying, Woe, woe, the great city, she that was arrayed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stone and pearl! for in one hour so great riches is made desolate. And every shipmaster, and every one that saileth any whither, and mariners, and as many as gain their living by sea, stood afar off, and cried out as they looked upon the smoke of her burning, saying, What (city) is like the great City? And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and mourning, saying, Woe, woe, the great city, wherein were made rich all that had their ships in the sea by reason of their costliness! for in one hour she is made desolate.”

All this assuredly relates to a city more like Tyre than Babylon, more like London than Rome ancient or modern. Why? Because all sorts of worldly greatness, those of Tyre added to those of Babylon, are used to symbolise all sorts of corresponding greatness distinguishing a corrupt Church or kingdom. The fall of ancient Babylon is here used symbolically of the fall of that Church, but to heighten the impressiveness of the description we find introduced what rather belongs to the fall of Tyre. The worldly Church contains all classes of men and all classes of communities; so that a city which was to symbolise that Church would naturally be described as great in every respect, and varied to the greatest extent, with citizens of every kind, with employment of every sort, with merchants and artisans of every description, with external relations

with many near or distant peoples, and with such a commerce as would imply the existence and the interests of shipmasters and sailors, and all who live by the sea as here described. Such being the character of the city, such also must be the character of its fall. We repeat, the material city symbolising being totally different from the corrupt spiritual community symbolised, the description given of the fall of the former must be totally different from what would be a literal description of the latter. However different in character, the total and final fall of the one could be most fitly used to represent the total and final fall of the other.

"And the fruits which thy soul lusted after are gone from thee." The material city representing and the corrupt spiritual people represented would thus alike suffer; all means and forms of self-indulgence would perish. "The merchants . . . made rich by her" will wonder at the greatness of her fall as well as lament over it. So it will be with all concerned in the prosperity of the antichristian Church, who depend upon her for the abundance of her false riches and delusive consolations. They will wonder and weep, when her fall comes. That fall, always sudden, because always unexpected, has been going on; and millions have wondered and wept. Greater wonder and more abundant weeping are in store for the future. Millions of all classes, whether on land or sea, have exclaimed, and will yet exclaim, "What (city) is like the great city?"—as multitudes are represented as saying, "Who is like unto the beast? and who is able to war with him?" As in the case of a great city of the earth, so in that of the great empire of Antichrist, these same millions will cry, "Woe, woe, the great city, wherein were made rich all that had their ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate." All that profit in any way, by either fallen city or fallen community, will thus cry and thus lament. But, says some one, the description of the city does not suit the Church which it represents. We reply, in what way could the description of the wild beast just alluded to suit the king, the pope, or the mysterious ruler whom it symbolises? As symbols, the city and the beast are most appropriate, whilst in themselves they differ as widely as they well could do from the community and the king which they symbolise.

5. *Ver.* 20. "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye saints, and ye apostles, and ye prophets; for God hath judged your judgment on her."

This apostrophe proceeds on the supposition that the Churches on earth and in heaven are one, or rather that both are in heaven,

and that those who have long ago left this world are still as one with those left behind ; so that all may take like interest in what thus takes place on earth. All these had for ages suffered fearfully at her hands. She had never ceased to persecute all such ; and from her very nature could not cease so to act as long as she had the power and opportunity. Well might they rejoice at the fall of such an enemy to Christ and to all who resembled and followed Him, and of such a fearful obstacle to the progress of the conversion and salvation of mankind ! The world's woe is the Church's joy. The rise of Christ means the fall of Antichrist. We cannot rejoice in the rise of the One without rejoicing in the fall of the other. This fine call to departed prophets, apostles, saints, is in harmony with the view we have been led to take of the great multitude of departed sealed ones of the seventh and fourteenth chapters already gathered to heaven, still interested in and connected with the Church on earth, and here again alluded to as all one with those delivered from the captivity and power of mystic Babylon. These, especially the apostles and prophets, are called upon to rejoice for a special and most important reason,—“God hath judged their judgment on her,” not only the judgment which all enlightened saints or Christians could not but justly pronounce, but the judgment which had been long before clearly and prophetically announced. Such prophecy becomes sure testimony. The predictions of the prophet Daniel and the apostle Paul as to the rise, the character, the persecution, the impious assumptions and the total destruction of this anti-christian Church, have been so wonderfully correct, and are being so wonderfully fulfilled, that they will remain to the end of time a striking and immovable monument raised by God Himself as an infallible testimony to the truth of the Christ and Christianity of the Bible.

6. *Vers. 21-24.* “And a strong angel took up a stone as it were a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with a mighty fall shall Babylon, the great city, be cast down, and shall be found no more at all. And the voice of harpers and minstrels and flute-players and trumpeters shall be heard no more at all in thee ; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft, shall be found any more at all in thee ; and the voice of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee ; and the light of a lamp shall shine no more at all in thee ; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee : for thy merchants were the princes of the earth ; for with thy sorcery were all the nations deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all that have been slain upon the earth.”

How grand a figure ! How impressive ! How expressive of entire and everlasting destruction ! Mystical, like ancient, Babylon shall perish for ever. We have here an allusion to Jer. li. 61-4, "And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, When thou comest to Babylon, then see that thou read all these words, and say, O Lord, Thou hast spoken concerning this place to cut it off, that none shall dwell therein, neither man nor beast, but that it shall be desolate for ever. And it shall be, when thou hast made an end of reading this book, that thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates : and thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise again because of the evil that I will bring upon her." Most sublimely is the like doom represented and pronounced here by the angel as to mystical Babylon. We must not assume that the suddenness here indicated, as in one hour, is to be literally understood. Ancient Babylon, though suddenly and as if in one hour taken by the Medes and Persians, was not at once destroyed by them, but continued to exist for centuries after. If we were to maintain that a sudden and almost instantaneous fall was intended, we should, to be consistent, maintain that the rise of Pagan Rome was to all intents also instantaneous as she is seen, first by Daniel and next by the apostle John, rising, as if in a moment, from the depths of the sea, and yet in reality taking many hundreds of years so to rise. We must remember that objects seen at a great distance on the prophetic horizon may appear as if at once, because the vision is given in a moment, though they may have taken ages or centuries to come to their height. We must beware, then, of taking an extravagant view, or giving even an irrational interpretation, of the figurative representations of this Book. How touching the picture of universal desolation and death ! How great the contrast between what this city was and what she was destined to become ! Yes, what a contrast between a vast, wealthy, busy, crowded city, so full of life, show, activity, pleasure, with all the associations of a mass of intelligent, aspiring, enterprising, social beings, and the almost, if not altogether, buried ruins, the abode of wild beasts and birds, and surrounded with what can tell only of the desolations of many generations. So, according to its prophetic doom, has it been with the proud and gorgeous city of ancient Babylon.

Mystic Babylon can never leave behind it the same local and geographical associations with such barbaric splendour and worldly greatness ; but the history of Europe for many centuries will present to the mind of every intelligent man such a view of her rise, her power, her grandeur, her authority over the kingdoms of the earth,

her spiritual despotism, her subtle, serpentine influence, her cruel, murderous persecutions, with her fall after fall, or loss after loss, her constant decay, and her sure, final and tremendous fall, that no other fall of city or country, no other destruction of any kind whatever, can ever equal that of which the words of this chapter are intended to give the sublimely symbolical picture. As we read we feel constrained to pity. But the voice from heaven solemnly forbids; and loudly and yet most pathetically calls and constrains us to rejoice, by adding the awful indictment, "And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all that have been slain upon the earth." These words resemble those of Christ with respect to apostate Jerusalem, and are equally appropriate with respect to the apostate Christian Church. Why "of all slain on the earth"? Doubtless all saintly persons whom she persecuted actually, and all represented by these persons, and whom she would have persecuted and put to death for the same reason. The words of Christ just referred to proceed on the same principle (Luke xi. 49-51), "Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send unto them prophets and apostles; and (some) of them they shall kill and persecute; that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zachariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary: yea, I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation." He who persecutes or kills a prophet as a prophet, in spirit and by his conduct, persecutes and kills the whole class to which the prophet belongs. The same holds as to the treatment, good or bad, of saints or righteous men, and will receive corresponding reward or punishment.

II.

CHAPTER XIX.

TRIUMPHAL PRAISE FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF BABYLON. APPROACHING MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB. THE CONQUEROR WITH MANY DIADEMS COMES FORTH WITH HIS TRUE AND FAITHFUL ARMY. FINAL CONTEST BETWEEN CHRIST AND ANTICHRIST.

1. *Vers. 1-10.* "After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, Hallelujah; salvation, and glory, and power, belong to our God: for true and righteous are His judgments; for He hath judged the great harlot, which did corrupt the earth with

her fornication, and He hath avenged the blood of His servants at her hand. And a second time they say, Hallelujah. And her smoke goeth up for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God that sitteth on the throne, saying, Amen : Hallelujah. And a voice came forth from the throne, saying, Give praise to our God, all ye His servants, ye that fear Him, the small and the great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah : for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth. Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto Him : for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright (and) pure : for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are true words of God. And I fell down before his feet to worship him. And he saith unto me, See thou do it not : I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren that hold the testimony of Jesus : worship God : for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

(1) This chapter might with advantage have been connected with the preceding. The enemies of the Church have been very powerful, and but too successful in the fearful conflict. Many a martyr has suffered. Many a Church has been perverted or suppressed. The glorious gospel has been hid. All civil and religious liberty has perished. The saints have had a long dark night of oppression and sorrow. The day of deliverance has dawned ; and they have again multiplied. Blow after blow has been struck ; and now that day seems to have come to the full. The approaching fall of the hostile city has been prophetically announced as if it were past. The shout of victory has been raised. All heaven and earth are glad. Still the war is not yet ended. Nothing has been said of the method or means of taking the city ; unless in one or two obscure hints, such as that of the drying up of the waters of the Euphrates and so preparing the way for the assailing foe or kings of the East, and that of the treading of the great winepress outside the city or of the great and final battle of this chapter. In last chapter the fall is spoken of as if already effected. The battle of this shows how the beast, the antichristian king, was to be overcome and taken, and thus how his capital, the great city, was to be entered and destroyed.

(2) "*After these things I heard a great voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, Hallelujah ; salvation, and glory, and power, belong to our God : for true and righteous are His judgments ;*

for He hath judged the great harlot, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and He hath avenged the blood of His servants at her hand." Though said to be in heaven, as Christians on earth are described in this Book as "those who dwell in heaven," and others as "those who dwell on the earth," this multitude might be the aggregate of the true Church in this world. The mere form of expression cannot decide. However, as the elders and living creatures are said to worship, we seem bound to infer that the whole scene is in heaven. We have thus a further reference to "the multitude which no man can number," and to the same multitude made up of the countless "harpers" heard in heaven "harping with their harps," and now here represented as rejoicing in heaven over the mighty conquest of Antichrist and his followers on earth. They shout in an ecstasy of joy, "Hallelujah," Praise ye Jehovah; "salvation, and glory, and power, belong to our God." All these are revealed through the fall of the greatest enemy of Christ, the Church, and even the world. A great multitude within that countless multitude had assuredly suffered even up to death at the hand of the apostate Church. They knew her spirit and her power. They knew that she would continue to persecute as long as she had the power. All these references show the intense interest of departed saints in the welfare of those whom they have left behind, and in the progress and prosperity of the Church for which they lived and died. We need not wonder, then, that John in Patmos, as a representative of the Church at large, and specially of the martyr-Church, should have his ears unstopped that he might hear that mighty shout of triumph thus raised in heaven, that he might tell to us how these hosts of the redeemed rejoiced over the victories of the 144,000 sealed ones on earth, and that we might even feel as if we heard the like shouts of departed saints at every victory and at every deliverance here below.

(3) "*And a second time they say, Hallelujah. And her smoke goeth up for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God that sitteth on the throne, saying, Amen; Hallelujah.*" This second Hallelujah was no vain repetition. It came from the very depths of their hearts, which may have been often wrung with anguish through their treatment by this cruel foe. We may suppose two distinct shouts referred to; each being a long-continued Hallelujah,—the one at the thought of the fall of the enemy,—the other at the thought of this fall being complete and irrecoverable. Hence,

perhaps, the reason assigned,—“And her smoke goeth up for ever and ever.” Hence, too, the cry of the elders and living creatures,—“Amen; Hallelujah,”—an Amen of acquiescence in the awful judgment executed, and a Hallelujah of praise for the great deliverance thus accomplished. It has been thought that the use of the Hebrew here might be taken as intended to suggest the accession of many Jews to the Christian Church. We think it is rather to be traced to the fact that the whole Christian Church is contemplated in this Book as the Israel of God. The reference to the smoke going up for ever is in keeping with what we have so often alluded to—namely, that the fall of the apostate Church is throughout represented as that of a great worldly city; so that it would be utterly vain to attempt to explain or to apply all the details of the one to corresponding details of the other. The completeness of the destruction is meant. As the city is symbolic of a great community, we can hardly suppose that that community was positively to suffer for ever and ever. Whatever the treatment of those composing it, because of their personal responsibility, we must not suppose the same treatment of the organised whole. Nor can we regard the mode of expression, however strong, as necessarily implying more or other than we have said—absolute and everlasting destruction, as in another prophetic Book we have a very similar expression, which we can clearly see to involve no real idea of eternity. We refer to Isaiah xxxiv. 6-11, “The Lord hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Edom . . . for it is the day of the Lord’s vengeance, the year of recompense in the controversy of Zion . . . and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever . . . none shall pass through it for ever and ever. But the pelican and the porcupine shall possess it.” Here, *first*, as a matter of fact, no such smoke is to be seen; and, *secondly*, if the land were so burned, the lower creatures could not live there any more than men. In both cases full and final destruction is meant.

1 (4) “*And a voice came forth from the throne, saying, Give praise to our God, all ye His servants, ye that fear Him, the small and the great.*” This voice we naturally infer can be none else than that of Jesus Christ. The use of the words “our God” would appear against this. However, they might rather remind us of how Jesus so wonderfully identified Himself with His followers on earth, and of how beautifully He spoke immediately after His resurrection (John

xx. 17): "Go unto My brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and My God and your God." Why, then, not suppose Him to say the same thing here—"our God"? Alford here argues, "*ἀπό* perhaps gives more the direction than the actual source of the voice (*ἐκ*, as rec.). It is useless to conjecture whose voice it is: but we may say that (*τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν*) it is not that of the Lamb. Our Lord never spoke thus: cf. John xx. 17." We have just regarded the two modes of expression as virtually equivalent. Viewed as His, the command is most fit. Well might all so adore and praise and magnify the God of such judgment on the one side and such deliverance on the other!

(5) "*And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah; for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth.*" The former multitude we have regarded as in heaven; and this, which evidently differs from it, we must view as still on earth. The same class of Christians seems referred to in chap. xi. 18,— "them that fear Thy name, the small and the great," the very description given in the preceding verse of those addressed by the voice from the throne, "ye that fear Him, the small and the great." At the time here meant, then, the number of true Christians must be great, called, like those in heaven, a great multitude. These know well the character and history of the great, cruel, persecuting city, and are animated with an all-pervading and intense spirit of exultation over the fall of the true Church's direst and most malignant foe. This glowing exultation is here most powerfully described as expressing itself as with "the voice of a great multitude, the voice of many waters, the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth." But, it may be asked, whence so vast a number of saints or true Christians? We must remember that, long before this time, a tenth of the great city had fallen, the revived witnesses had been as long engaged in evangelistic work, the angel of the everlasting gospel had been fully employed; and whilst Babylon had been long falling, the true Jerusalem had been as long rising. After this very period, and as set forth in this chapter, the crowned Conqueror of the first seal had been going on "conquering and to conquer"; and, though His first great conquests seem most mysteriously to have suffered from the devastating power of Antichrist, or through the great apostasy which was so early predicted and described, He had again returned to the mighty conflict, and so regained many regions of the earth as to appear no longer with the simple crown of

promised victory, but now with many diadems expressive of large and final conquest. The army, or rather the armies, of the symbolic 144,000, called "the armies which are in heaven," as all true Christians are called "those who dwell in heaven," must now be counted by millions, "the called and chosen and faithful" soldiers of the Cross. These armies are preparing for the final struggle. They rejoice in the might of their great Captain. They see, as it were, their God seated on His great throne, and they cry, "Hallelujah ; for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth," just as we found, chap. xi. 17, the four-and-twenty elders worshipping and saying, "We give Thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty . . . because Thou hast taken Thy great power, and didst reign." During the darkest hours of the reign of the beast, He seemed as if to have withdrawn from the government of the world ; but now He had again taken into His almighty hand the reins of government, had begun, as it were, His new reign by acting the solemn regal part of a great Judge, pronounced a sentence of vindication on all the confessors and martyrs of many generations and of condemnation of the whole kingdom of the beast or direful antagonist of His Church and people,—a sentence which, in both of its aspects, He was now engaged in executing to its very fullest extent.

(6) "*Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto Him : for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright (and) pure ; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.*" Such are the words of the great multitude of Christians at this special period. The fall of Babylon has been announced as past, and yet it has not come. It is seen to be certain and near. These saints rejoice over it, as if they had actually witnessed the terrible catastrophe, and so, not only greatly rejoice, but give the glory to "Him that sitteth upon the throne." Their words imply very much more, even that the renewed Church has been very greatly enlarged as well as raised to a high spiritual condition. They clearly see that the fall of the false Church is to be followed by the very highest prosperity of the true—nay, they see that the true has already risen to a higher than any former prosperity, and that only through such and yet higher prosperity can the great coming battle issuing in that fall be really successful. "The armies that are in heaven," these very saints whose garments of fine linen are woven of their pure and bright righteousness, must thus be of highest spirit and character, if, under their glorious Leader, they are finally to conquer. In fact, they know that preparation for the

coming marriage implies also preparation for the coming contest. They know that, in spiritual warfare, to be "clothed in fine linen, bright (and) pure" is also to be "clad in the armour of light"; that, in fact, the battle is a battle of holy against unholy character, of a richly Christian spirit against an intensely worldly spirit, of loving righteous conduct against selfish unrighteous conduct. Knowing all this, and knowing the high spiritual condition of the Christians of the time, they clearly see that the Church has approached her maturity, and risen to the full height of primitive excellency, and is thus prepared, or "made ready," for that true and blissful marriage union, which they speak of, in the spirit of prophetic certainty, as actually come. This marriage cannot be that alluded to in the parable of the ten virgins. In the case of the latter we are told the bridegroom will come most unexpectedly. Here the whole multitude is represented as fully aware of the coming marriage.

It is to be feared that many have formed a far too literal conception of the nature of this marriage, as if to be celebrated on some one special day, at some one appointed place, and with bridegroom and bride then and there actually and visibly present, nay, with some grand ceremonial witnessed by angels as well as men. Such may indeed, to some extent at least, be the case when Christ and His people, the glorious King and the glorified Queen, shall be finally and for ever united as one complete and eternal kingdom, not on earth, but in heaven. This marriage takes place on earth. It takes place when the false queen, false bride or wife, shall have been practically condemned, and shall have ceased to be. It takes place when Christ evidently rises to full possession of the kingdom or kingly power over the world. It takes place, as we shall find, when the millennial period may be said to have begun. Of this subject we may do well to treat somewhat fully:

First: The idea of such a marriage is common and familiar to both the Old and the New Testaments. Thus, whatever may be said of its literal reference to the marriage of Solomon, the forty-fifth Psalm has justly been regarded at all times as celebrating the union of the Messiah with the true and spiritual Israel, in fact, and to all intents, the marriage here referred to. Of course, all is written in language suitable to the existing type rather than to the future or predicted reality. So throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, and especially the prophecies, the relation of Jehovah to Israel, of the Divine King to the peculiar kingdom of Israel, is set forth—sometimes in express terms, more frequently by unmistakable allusions. We have already referred to one instance, Jer. ii. 2: "Thus saith the Lord, I

remember concerning thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals; how thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." This is again alluded to, and that in a way illustrative of what we regard as the marriage in question, Jer. xxxi. 31-34: "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they brake, although I was an Husband unto them, saith the Lord. But this is the covenant which I shall make. . . . I will put My law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God and they shall be My people; and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more."

Jehovah was thus the Husband of His people, or became such; was, in fact, openly married to them at the time of the giving of the law and of entering into covenant relationship with them as His chosen people and kingdom. The marriage union, in fact, began, and was openly declared or consummated, when the people of Israel was duly and fully constituted the kingdom of Jehovah. Then, as in chap. ii. 2, was the time of Israel's espousals. So much for the type. The antitype and her marriage may be said to be virtually announced in the promise of the new covenant with the spiritual Israel, in whose hearts the law of God—we may say the true marriage law of love—was to be written. Though this new covenant was made with the Christian Church from the beginning, we may regard the words employed as suggesting that, as the marriage of typical Israel did not take place till the bride, or intended wife, had grown up to full womanhood—that is, till the family of Israel had become the nation of Israel—so the marriage of spiritual Israel is to be viewed as taking place, not in the earlier days of the Christian Church, but long after, or when that Church comes to her full maturity, even at the very time now under consideration. This seems at least hinted at in those words expressive of the widespread knowledge of Jehovah.

Be this as it may, we seem to have an important illustration in Isa. liv. 4-6: "Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and the reproach of thy widow-

hood shalt thou remember no more ;" or, as Cheyne has put it, "'the shame of thy maidenhood,' *i.e.* the time before the Sinaitic covenant, by which Israel became the 'bride' of Jehovah. The *shame* of this period will be the Egyptian bondage; the '*reproach* of thy widowhood,' the Babylonian captivity;"—"For thy Maker is thine Husband; the Lord of hosts is His name; and the Holy One of Israel is thy Redeemer; the God of the whole earth shall He be called. For the Lord hath called thee as a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, even a wife of youth, when she is cast off, saith thy God." There may thus be said to be a renewal of the marriage union. The parallel between this and the case in hand is very striking. Both typical and spiritual Israel became apostate, were disclaimed and, as if in widowhood, alike captives in literal and mystical Babylon; and, when delivered from captivity, declared—the one to be the wife of Jehovah, and the other to be the wife of Jesus Christ. The illustration is simple. Israel, the chosen of Jehovah, and as much His people as at any future time, does not become the bride and wife of Jehovah, till the days of her youth are past, or till she has grown up to her maturity. So the people of Christ, though His chosen bride and wife from the beginning, have to come to like full maturity, that indicate by the words before us and by the context before and after, before her marriage union may be said to have been consummated.

Secondly: This marriage, though not so called, is clearly announced (Dan. vii. 13, 14): "And I saw in the night visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven,"—in power and majesty, as at the judicial destruction of Jerusalem,—"*one like unto a son of man*, and he came even to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before Him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." Now, when Jehovah began to act as the King of Israel, we find His procedure called a marriage—or, at least, king and kingdom are called husband and wife. If, then, the Son of man becomes the King of restored spiritual Israel, a like marriage may be said to take place, or Christ and His people become husband and wife. The time alluded to in Daniel is precisely the time spoken of in this place. In both, the same judgment of the same evil power, the little horn of the fourth or Roman beast on the one hand, and the restored head of the same beast or the beast of Rev. xvii. on the other, is clearly referred to. We have more than once called

attention to this in treating of chap. xi. 17, 18; chap. xiv. 7; chap. xvii. 1; chap. xviii. 8, 20; and chap. xix. 2. Hence, it is added, vers. 21-27: "I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom;"—or, as Rev. xi. 17, 18: "We give Thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty . . . because Thou hast taken Thy great power . . . and Thy wrath came, and the time of the dead to be judged, and the time to give their reward to Thy servants the prophets, and to the saints . . . and to destroy them that destroy the earth." "And he shall speak words against the Most High, and wear out the saints of the Most High . . . and they shall be given into his hand until a time, times, and half a time,"—the same period as that of the beast;—"but the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and destroy it unto the end;"—all this we have found to be about to be accomplished in the fall of mystical Babylon;—"And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High,"—just as this time of judgment is said, Rev. xi. 18, to be the time "to give reward . . . to the saints, and to them that fear Thy name, the small and the great." In Dan. vii. the kingdom is said to be given at once to the Son of man and to the saints of the Most High,—at once to Christ and to Christians; He and they being constituted one kingdom; or, as here in Revelation married or constituted bridegroom and bride, husband and wife, for ever and ever.

Thirdly: This same marriage is finally alluded to in Rev. xxi. 2, 9-11: "And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband . . . and He spake unto me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb. . . . And He . . . shewed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God." Many regard this as representing the Divine kingdom in its state of perfect and eternal blessedness and glory. We have no doubt that all this is implied; but we must remember that we are expressly told that this city comes down from heaven to earth. It represents the kingdom of heaven: but as we study the details of the description, we find that what we may call both departments of that kingdom must be regarded as alike, and really meant—the kingdom of grace on earth, and the kingdom of glory in heaven. This we think will fully appear in due course.

This descending bride, city, or kingdom, consists of the collective body of saints or Christians, or of those born of God, and so from above or in heaven. Hence, the bride or city is said to come down from heaven. But why come down from heaven to earth? Would not this be to come from the Bridegroom who is in heaven? Yes, if "the Son of man" were a mere man, and dwelt in heaven alone. But He is more than man, and lives and rules on earth, "walks among the golden candlesticks," has promised to all His faithful followers to be "with them always, even to the end of the world." The bride, then, comes down to the Bridegroom. This bride, this sun-clad woman, is here identified with the holy Jerusalem, as elsewhere the pretended wife, the unholy and faithless woman, is identified with the mystic Babylon, the great city which rules over the nations of the earth and seeks the utter destruction of the true city of God. This should be kept fully in view. The true Church on earth, the heavenly Jerusalem, is to be contrasted with the false church on earth, the worldly Babylon. The beast has his bride, this Babylon. The Lamb has His, the New Jerusalem. Antichrist and his kingdom or church are on earth. Christ and His Church or kingdom must be regarded as also on earth. The former have long usurped the place of the latter. The former have long appeared more visible and greater than the latter. The former are destined to perish utterly, whilst the latter must continue on earth, and in heaven for ever and ever. The New Jerusalem comes down from heaven as a bride adorned and made ready for her husband. She comes down in all her Divine and heavenly glory to become the wife, the queen, of the Lamb, to live and reign with Him on earth, for that long period of a thousand mystical years. When she thus appears on earth, in the words before us, "the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife has made herself ready." If we would fix the date of the marriage we must find out, as we cannot, the date of this glorious appearing, not of Christ the Husband, come down from heaven to dwell with His wife on earth, but of the beautiful appearance of the Christian Church, the bride or wife, from heaven to live with Christ on earth. We see no sign of the nearness of the coming day. Antichrist yet appears too strong. The true Church is yet too feeble and too little prepared. When the time here alluded to comes, when Babylon is just about to fall, when the true Church has become greatly enlarged, and risen to a far greater height above the world, when she appears in all her heavenly and beautiful spiritual attire, Christians will see, as we cannot, that the marriage of the Lamb is nearly, if not fully come.

Fourthly : This marriage, as we have more than once hinted at, in some high sense depends on the character and conduct of the bride herself,—she must make herself ready, or it must be given to her, “that she should array herself in fine linen, bright (and) pure : for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.” Till the Church in her numerous membership, or till the great multitude, here alluded to as anticipating the nuptial day, has become most truly Christian, of the highest spiritual life and character, and fitted to demonstrate to all men that “the kingdom of heaven” has most certainly come, that glorious day cannot fully come. Here we are reminded of a most important principle that the Church is a great converting power in proportion to her own real goodness, her own spiritual and moral worth, her own “righteous acts, the fine linen, pure (and) bright” in which she is attired and appears before the world. Christ-likeness best commends Christ and converts to Him. The woman, seen to be clothed with the sun of Divine and heavenly light, cannot fail to direct all thoughts to Christ and to God, to prove that “pure and undefiled religion” is too beautiful and precious to be of human or merely earthly origin. As we shall find, and as we have already said, in the great and triumphant battle of this chapter, the final conflict of Christ and Antichrist, to be “clothed in fine linen” is to be “clad in the armour of light”; so that the mystic dress forms the resistless arms by which the armies of heaven triumph over the kings and kingdoms of the world.

(7) “*And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb.*” We need not say that various have been the views taken of this supper. The correct one will depend upon the correctness of the view taken of the marriage of the bride. A key may be found to at least a partial knowledge of what is here meant in chap. iii. 20: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.” Here we have the case of the individual saint or Christian. Christ calls and is welcomed. Christ and the called one are spiritually united, love one another as bridegroom and bride, husband and wife: the Saviour and saved are spiritually and truly married: a feast of love and joy immediately follows,—a marriage supper, not *the* marriage supper, of the Lamb. Every believing, loving, saved soul, thus and for ever united to Christ, is a bride or wife of Christ; and ought ever to realise in thought, and glory and rejoice in spirit over, this Divine and heavenly relationship; and to seek to lead a divine and heavenly life in harmony with it. Now

the bride or wife here spoken of is simply the whole multitude of such individual saints or Christians, as is not only evident in itself but clearly indicated in this place, where, after the wife is said to "array herself in fine linen, pure (and) bright," we are told that "the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints." The righteousness of each and of all the saints is thus the righteousness of the one bride or wife.

The kingdom or Church of Christ, then, viewed collectively, is the bride or wife of Christ; viewed individually it consists of all true believers. As already said, this has been true in every age from the beginning. Ever since Christ gathered around Him His apostles, and emphatically since the day of Pentecost, Christ has had a Church, a bride, a wife on earth. At the time here referred to, the wife is viewed like Israel during the corresponding captivity, as having, because of almost universal apostasy and its necessary consequences, spent a long and most sorrowful widowhood; yet as having now, in the words of Isaiah, heard and acted according to the inspiring and lifegiving words of the voice from heaven—"Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of His fury. . . . Behold, I have taken out of thine hand . . . the cup of My fury; thou shalt no more drink it again: and I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee. . . . Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean. Shake thyself from the dust: arise, sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion. . . . How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! The voice of thy watchman! They lift up the voice, together do they sing; for they shall see, eye to eye, when the Lord returneth to Zion. Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted His people, He hath redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord hath made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."

How beautiful the words! Used in the first instance of Israel and ancient Babylon, we might say, how much more applicable to spiritual Israel and mystical Babylon,—and that at the very period here referred to,—the renewed union of Christ and His people, the growth of that people into a vast and highly Christian multitude,

redeemed from a worse than the Babylonish captivity, clothed in strength and beauty, the bride and wife of the Lamb, enjoying the richest, purest feast of Divine and heavenly love, even what is here finely called, "the marriage supper of the Lamb." This feast, indeed, is terrestrial and not celestial, millennial and not eternal; and yet, in a very high sense it is both: for, whilst the bride or wife, as here spoken of, is the Church of the millennial age, what we may call the Church of the first resurrection and of the mystic thousand years which follow, the Church of the New Jerusalem which comes down from heaven, all saints or true Christians who make up the one true bride or wife of these blissful ages, or who are the citizens of that Jerusalem, will never cease to enjoy this feast; but, as they are called, one by one, to come up higher, shall continue to enjoy the same feast of love for ever and ever. All this will more fully appear when we come to treat of the New Jerusalem; and when it is seen that that Jerusalem symbolises the kingdom of heaven, not as on earth alone, nor as in heaven alone, nor as millennial alone, nor as celestial alone, but as both. It need scarcely, therefore, be added, that the real and complete and final marriage of Christ and His people, the true and everlasting "marriage supper of the Lamb," can only take place and be perfectly and eternally enjoyed, when the work of grace in earth is ended, when the state of glory in heaven has begun, or when the whole kingdom of the redeemed, represented by the bride and wife of the Lamb, shall have been raised to a glorious and perfect state in the eternal world. Well, accordingly, may the interpreting angel say, "Write, Blessed are they which are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb;" just as we shall find it said of the very same time and things in next chapter, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; over these the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years."

(8) "*And He saith unto me, These are true words of God.*" So the Revised Version, omitting the redoubled article. Alford renders more emphatically, "These sayings are the true (sayings) of God"; adding, "are the very truth of God, and shall veritably come to pass." Whether these words or sayings refer to the whole Apocalypse, as has been suggested, or to the wonderful visions of the chapter, it was well to assure us of all being really from God. The glorious Divine and human union alluded to might well appear beyond all belief. How true the words, whether taken of this world or of the next, or rather of both: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither

have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." The disclosures of Scripture regarding the people of God, even such as we have been considering, rise far above the conceptive or imaginative powers of man, and, through their very grandeur, give proof of their Divine or superhuman origin. Well it was, therefore, to interpose the strong and appropriate assurance, "These are the true sayings of God."

(9) "*And I fell down before his feet to worship him. And he saith unto me, See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee, and with thy brethren that hold the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*" Strange that an apostle of Jesus, and that the beloved disciple, should thus seem guilty of an act of idolatry. Possibly he may be supposed to have acted as subjects seem to have acted towards the kings of Israel, who represented the great king. Shall we suppose this to be an instance of the strong natural tendency to worship when men are under the power of high emotion, through the presence, real or imagined, of some superhuman being? Or, shall we not rather keep by the idea above suggested, that this mighty angel whose voice seems to have come from the very throne, and who may have come forth to speak to John, appeared to him to be none else than He whom he had seen in the opening vision, and before whom he fell "as one dead"? Be this as it may, it afforded an opportunity for giving a standing lesson to the Christian Churches and to Christians of all generations, and a solemn warning against idolatry of all kinds, with its innumerable evils, whether, as apparently here, of angels or of departed saints, or of Mary the mother of Jesus, or of the relics of martyrs and the like, afterwards to be practised so commonly, nay so universally, throughout the Church of the apostasy; and hence it is added, "*And He saith unto me, See thou do it not:*" I am no object of worship; I am simply "*a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren that hold the testimony of Jesus.*" In the Authorised Version we have, "*I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren;*" suggesting the idea, that the speaker was human and not angelic. However, the Revised Version is greatly to be preferred, nay, is perfectly correct. Angels are fellow-servants with saints in upholding and furthering the mediatorial kingdom of Jesus Christ."

"*Worship God.*" So said Jesus when tempted of the devil: "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." Nor was there ever a power on earth more subversive of idolatry and all the forms of superstition than Christianity; and yet, unless Christ is Divine as well as human, so that to worship

Him is to worship God, Christianity has been the means of introducing and spreading the most subtle, the most delusive, and most influential idolatry ever known among men; and that, too, maintained and practised by the greatest, wisest, and best of mankind. The angel adds, "*for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*;" a saying whose exact import is by no means very clear, and yet apparently suggesting, "I am a servant only and along with thee: for I come to instruct thee of the future of the kingdom of Jesus, and thus to join those who hold His testimony or whose part it is to witness concerning Him; and, as the testimony of Jesus is the spirit, the scope, the sum of all prophecy, I am a fellow-servant with thee, with all prophets and apostles and saints." Webster and Wilkinson: "The immediate object of the speaker is to assert the identity of every true prophetic and inspired utterance concerning God's dealings in the Church and the world, and under the present dispensation, with the gospel of Jesus Christ." Alford: "This spirit, given to me in that I show thee these things, given to thee in that thou seest and art to write them, is the token that we are fellow-servants and brethren."

2. *Vers. 11-16.* "And I saw the heaven opened; and, behold, a white horse, and He that sat thereon, called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. And His eyes (are) a flame of fire, and upon His head (are) many diadems; and He hath a name written, which no one knoweth but He Himself. And He (is) arrayed in a garment sprinkled with (or, dipped in) blood: and His name is called, The Word of God: And the armies which are in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white (and) pure. And out of His mouth proceedeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron; and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God. And He hath on His garment and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

(1) "*And I saw the heaven opened: and, behold, a white horse, and He that sat thereon, called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He doth judge and make war.*" On the right interpretation of this most expressive and impressive paragraph very much depends, in relation to the settlement of a most important controversy which has been carried on at different periods of the history of the Church, and never with more intensity of feeling, more ability and learning, or more deep and decided conviction on either side, than in our own times;—we mean that relating to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. That, by this Rider on a white horse, is

intended that great Captain of the redeemed hosts of the living God, there can be no reasonable doubt, and need be no lengthened discussion. The main point, in the interpretation of these words, is the sense in which the heaven is said to be opened, and in which this Rider is said to come forth. Some would take the words so literally that, instead of symbolising the Divine and heavenly character of the glorious Being about to enter the field of warfare, they would simply point to the heaven as actually opened for the purpose of providing for the literal forthcoming and descent to this world of the Almighty King and Captain, and His risen and glorified soldier-saints; and that in order to subdue and destroy Antichrist and all his allied kings and kingdoms of the earth. They thus regard this vision as setting forth the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, not only thus to crush all opposing powers, but to introduce a new millennial dispensation, and to reign on earth with His risen saints for literally a thousand years. We regard this as a totally mistaken view of this wonderful and most inspiring vision, as, we think, will appear as we proceed with our exposition.

Here, as well as elsewhere, we must guard against confounding, as those just referred to most remarkably confound, the symbols with the realities symbolised. "*I saw the heaven opened.*" So, as we find in chap. iv., John had previously seen "a door opened in heaven," that he might enter, and that he might behold what was within, and be made acquainted with "the things which must come to pass hereafter." Literally, he did not enter heaven. Literally, he could not have seen in heaven, if he had entered, what he saw in vision symbolically presented to him. When called upon to "come up hither," he expressly tells us in what sense he obeyed or was enabled to ascend and enter: "Straightway, I was in the Spirit: and, behold, there was a throne in heaven," etc.;—straightway he had the grand promised disclosures made. He might have used the words of Ezekiel, "It came to pass, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God;" or, he might have said, "The Spirit lifted me up, and brought me in the visions of God to heaven," just as the same prophet actually said, "The Spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem." To be so brought, as Ezekiel had not to leave the banks of the Chebar, so John had not to leave the Isle of Patmos. Earlier still, John tells us, "I was in the Spirit, on the Lord's day . . . and I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the candlesticks One like unto a Son of man." Here, once more, John is in the Spirit, and, as in the one vision he saw a door in heaven, and in the

other one like unto a Son of man, he now sees heaven opened and the same Son of man coming forth from heaven. In both instances that Son of man was actually in heaven. In the former, He had not literally to come down to earth in order to do what John saw Him symbolically represented as doing, walking amidst the golden candlesticks, acting the part of the true and only all-present and ever-present Head of the Church on earth. The human presence and action were employed to symbolise what alone could be possibly meant, even the Divine presence and action amidst and toward all Christians and all Churches in this world. In the latter or the present vision He is seen also in human form and in like manner, symbolically represented as coming forth from heaven in the character of King and Captain of His people, for the purpose of putting down His and their antichristian and persecuting foes. This symbolic representation is just as perfectly suitable to Him as Divine King and Captain, as is the other of Him as Divine High Priest and King. The man Christ Jesus had not to leave the throne of heaven in order fitly to set forth His Divine work on earth; and why should He have to leave that throne in order fitly to set forth His coming down or His Divine descent to earth to fulfil the purpose here assigned?

The whole vision, by itself and also as connected with other visions, as well as the whole scope of this Book, demonstrate the correctness of this view alone. Whatever other reasons there may be for representing this great Captain as coming forth from heaven, we need be at no loss to find one of real importance. The Rider on the white horse is the grand antagonist of the beast. The first rider on a white horse had so gone on conquering as to overthrow the fourth beast of Daniel, or this very beast in his first or original form, namely, Pagan Rome. We have seen how the war of Michael and the dragon is to be identified with this war of the Rider on the white horse, and both with the great war of Christianity against Paganism, or, more correctly, and without a figure, the work of the early Christian Church in order to the conversion of the world. The triumph of the Church is symbolised by the fall of the dragon from heaven to the earth. What followed? The dragon went away to seek to recover his lost position; and, as the result, the beast from the abyss by-and-by appeared—the first beast, whose head was wounded to death, in a new form, the deadly wound healed, the former pagan life and spirit restored, the triumphant Church perverted and corrupted and changed into the Church of the great apostasy; in fact, the beast from the sea risen from the

dead in the beast from the abyss, Pagan Rome in spirit restored in Papal Rome, the Christian Church become the antichristian Church. As expressive of this, what could be more appropriate, than that Antichrist, symbolised by the beast from the abyss, or from hell, should be represented as met by his true and invincible Antagonist, the Christ, whose throne he had so long usurped, and whose kingdom of true saints he had so long wasted and sought to destroy, symbolised as a great warrior coming forth from heaven,—the beast representing the dragon, or Satan, and the warrior representing God? Of itself this seems more than sufficient to account for the opening of heaven and the coming forth of the great Captain of the saintly army.

Further, the symbolism enables us with certainty to identify the royal High Priest of the first vision—in the midst of the golden candlesticks, with “eyes as a flame of fire, and with a sharp sword proceeding out of his mouth”—with the kingly warrior of this vision who also has “eyes as a flame of fire, and a sharp sword proceeding out of his mouth,” and, therefore, with the first Rider on a white horse whom we have identified with the like rider of this vision, only the former being fitly represented as merely starting in his triumphant career, and the latter as fitly set forth after many a conquest had placed many a diadem on his royal Head. All this is beautifully harmonious. As King of the whole kingdom of heaven Christ is enthroned in heaven, and might be said, like God, to bend or open the heavens and to come down to earth, as here and at any time, when He comes forth to accomplish any design great or small, and yet He is also, and according to His precious promise, “with His people always, even to the end of the world,” walking amidst the golden candlesticks, holding the stars in His right hand, “the Faithful and True Witness” to His Church and the world. Possessing a Divine as well as a human nature, He may be most freely, most variously, and yet most truly, symbolised as at one and the same time in heaven and on earth, walking on earth and coming out of heaven, and yet seated on His Father’s throne there. How sublime in its simplicity the first figure of the heavenly Conqueror—Conqueror of sin and death—on His white horse of holy warfare and certain victory, having no weapon but a simple significant bow in His hand, and receiving a single and also significant crown as He went forth “conquering and to conquer.” He goes on thus conquering, as we have said, till the mighty power of heathen Rome has to yield to those arms which are “not carnal, but spiritual and mighty.”

Most mysteriously, the kingdom thus gloriously won was perverted, and, while professing to be still His, once more became the kingdom of His adversary, and pursued and persecuted to the death those true and faithful saints who continued loyal to their Lord and Master. Now He comes forth to defend and exalt those devoted subjects, and to overthrow all who had proved His and their most deadly enemies. We have pointed to the first blow dealt to the beast after the resurrection of the witnesses, and issuing in the fall of one tenth of the capital of the kingdom of the beast. The white horse, with its conquering Warrior and His spiritual weapons, may from that date be seen going on from field after field of bloodless battle, and not death-dealing but life-giving victory. Now, blow after blow having been given, and conquest after conquest made, the royal Conqueror is here most fitly represented as wearing no single crown of victory, but many crowns, or rather diadems, of wide and glorious dominion; and that for the final and complete destruction of those for whose return to loyalty He had been long mercifully seeking and patiently waiting, but who, with persistent wickedness and impenitence, "would not have Him to reign over them." Identifying Him most clearly with Jesus Christ, "the Faithful Witness" of chap. i. 5, and with "The Amen, the Faithful and True Witness" of chap. iii. 14, the Christ who claims the entire heart of His people, and who complained of the lukewarmness of the Church in Laodicea, He is called by the expressive name "FAITHFUL AND TRUE." How grand, how significant and appropriate a name! Well may all His followers trust in Him, and seek to become true and faithful like Him! Let all remember, both friends and foes, that they may expect Him to be true and faithful to His promises as to His threatenings, to His threatenings as to His promises, true and faithful both as a Saviour and as a Judge.

And hence it is added, "*And in righteousness He doth judge and make war.*" At this special time He comes for this very purpose. Nay, to individuals as well as communities, to faithless Christians as well as faithless Churches, He is ever coming, and has been ever coming, however invisibly, for this same most awful purpose. This procedure belongs not, as has been mistakenly affirmed, to a new and different millennial dispensation, but to that of the present, even throughout its uninterrupted course, as is clearly shown by the words addressed to the Church in Pergamum: "Repent, therefore; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth." He will enter

upon no unrighteous warfare. To His direst foes He will do no injustice, nothing beyond their just deserts. As we have said even of the devotees of Antichrist, He has been long mercifully seeking and patiently waiting for their return. He cannot for ever forbear. For the express purpose of so judging and dealing with Antichrist, and the antichristian kings and peoples, He is here and elsewhere said to come—not to judge and make war in relation to the many kings and peoples of the world at large, as has been most erroneously supposed and maintained. This coming is certainly not to judge mankind in general, or the kings and kingdoms of the whole earth; but, we repeat, to judge and make war against “the beast and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat upon the horse, and against His armies,”—therefore, those kings of the earth only who were confederate with the beast; and as to whom it has been said, in words whose fulfilment this vision represents, chap. xvii. 13, 14: “These have one mind, and they give their power and authority unto the beast. These shall war against the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and they (also shall overcome) that are with Him, called and chosen and faithful.” This time of judgment and of war is to be identified with that of chaps. xi. 18; xiv. 7; xviii. 8, 20; xx. 4, and especially with that of Dan. vii. 26,—all of which refer to the judgment of antichristian powers and peoples in particular, and not to that of the world in general; implying at the same time a glorious practical vindication of the persecuted Church of Jesus Christ; and finally issuing in what is described symbolically as the great and triumphant battle of this Captain and His army against the beast along with his confederate kings and their armies, to which we shall again refer in due course.

(2) “*And His eyes (are) a flame of fire, and upon His head (are) many diadems; and He hath a name written which no one knoweth but He Himself.*” These words serve clearly to identify this great Captain with the royal Head of the Christian Church represented as in the midst of the golden candlesticks in the first, most instructive, and invaluable vision of this Book, and with the Rider on the white horse in the like precious vision of the first seal. The eyes of bright and intensely burning flame tell us of Divine omniscience, purity, and zeal. The many diadems remind us of the one crown, and set before us the many victories and mighty conquests of Him who “went forth conquering and to conquer.” How often the successes of the gospel are spoken of with despondency and even

with contempt! Keeping in view the long period predicted, or the time mysteriously permitted to the antichristian king to crush the truly Christian people, we would rather greatly admire the marvellous change which the gospel has made in both Church and world, and exclaim, "What hath God wrought!" Even those who, in sad and miserable unbelief, accord to Christ the praise of being no more than one of the great and good men of the world, cannot contemplate the crucifixion of Jesus as revealing the estimate formed of Him by His own nation, and the glory and service now accorded to Jesus as expressive of the estimate entertained of Him by the world at large, along with that mighty change for good just referred to, without wondering at the vastness and the worth of a life so short and so simple, followed by a death so dishonouring and so dreadful. In thinking of these many diadems, we may possibly forget the many kingdoms composing "the great multitude which no man can number," and which we have been led to regard as already gathered into the great and better country over which He reigns more truly than He does over the best of His numerous subjects now in this world.

These diadems may represent His large dominion in heaven as well as on earth. But we need not go from this world and His present kingdom on earth. Whilst the greatest, wisest, and best of men now exalt and worship Him as their Redeemer King; whilst we see the mighty movements of the present day for the enlargement of His kingdom; and whilst we perceive the penetrating power of the very idea of the name and character and work of Jesus over millions who refuse to give to Him the full homage of the heart; we seem to show our folly rather than our wisdom when we speak despondingly or disparagingly of the progress of the conquests by which the one crown of victory has been changed for the many diadems of dominion, now adorning the head of this true David, this promised and provided Leader and Commander of the Israel of God. We are sorry to find so many excellent Christians longing for the visible coming of this royal Captain of many diadems, because, among various reasons, they despair of the unseen leadership of the same Captain, who has already, through successful spiritual fighting, changed, as we have said, His one solitary crown for these many and glorious diadems, which might so well change their unmerited distrust into a more than well-merited faith. Ah! how apt—all of us—thus to distrust, thus to despair, of this Captain and every captain, and even of the great God Himself!

Let us learn a lesson of cheering, inspiring confidence from the

words which follow,—“*And He hath a name written, which no one knoweth but He Himself,*”—words which seem to forbid all endeavour to discover. Still, we may at least find out something important concerning it. In chap. ii. 17, the Christian who overcomes is promised “a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it.” A like promise is given, chap. iii. 12, “I will write upon him the name of My God . . . and Mine own new name,” which seems really the same as that just referred to as known by the Christian conqueror alone, and thus really that here said to be also “written,” and “which no one knoweth but” Christ Himself. As the Christian, as well as Christ, is said to have such a secret and unknown name, the idea seems to be that the thing so named can be known only by the consciousness of it as a thing actually possessed and enjoyed; so that even if the possessor told what he meant, or gave a name to it, that name, as expressive of the thing, could not be known, appreciated, or understood, apart from like personal experience, by any one whosoever, angel or man. As Christ calls it His “new name,” it cannot be a name expressive of what He is in Himself, or by the constitution of His mysterious mediatorial Person as both God and man, but a name expressive of what He has either done or become, or of both, namely, of what He has become by what He has done. Now, as the rewards of the Christian, promised in the seven epistles, correspond to those said to be received by Christ from His Father, we may infer that this new and secret name of Christ is due to His great and triumphant conquest, as the like name promised to the Christian is given in virtue of his conquest. We may assume, then, that this secret name implies the consciousness of all will and power to accomplish His mighty undertaking as Saviour and King of His people, as their Defender from all hostile powers, and as the Conqueror of all His and their enemies.

As we have said, this secret name assures us of this at least—that Jesus would have us to trust in Him as perfectly able and willing to fulfil the grand end of His mission in the conquest of the whole world, and in the overthrow of all antichristian powers, however mighty and invincible they may appear. If we may venture to suggest a name, which may, in the case of the Christian, be verbally named to all, and yet actually known and understood by none but by him who overcomes; and in proportion as he resembles his Captain in overcoming and going on to overcome, that name would to himself virtually be the consciousness of being and becoming more and more one with God, one with the Divine Source of all moral,

spiritual and everlasting strength. The Christian may know and feel this oneness with God, the consciousness of the Divine indwelling presence and power; but this consciousness no one can know but himself; this secret, mysterious and most wonderful consciousness he cannot possibly explain or make known to any other. So in the sense peculiar to the one only-begotten and all-conquering Son of the Highest, He has a still more secret, mysterious, and wonderful consciousness of oneness with His Divine and Almighty Father, which no other being in the wide universe can know or comprehend but Himself.

(3) "*And He (is) arrayed in a garment sprinkled with blood*" [*or, "He (was) clothed with a vesture dipped in blood*"]. Difference of opinion here obtains as to whether the blood spoken of is to be viewed as His own, shed for the sins of the world, or as that of His enemies with whom He is said to be about to fight. By itself either view might be pretty strongly upheld. As a symbol of the Prince of Peace going forth to win and conquer all hearts by that wondrous love revealed by the blood of the Cross, or by His very garments stained by His own blood shed for the salvation of the world, all would appear most suitable and impressive; and equally suitable and impressive, though perhaps not equally touching and expressive of self-sacrificing love, would it appear as setting forth the result of "treading the winepress" of Divine judicial wrath or of fighting the terrible battle in which He is afterwards said to engage. The marked direct allusion to Isaiah lxiii. 1-6, taken in connection with the winepress just referred to, would seem perfectly decisive and in favour of the latter. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in His apparel, marching in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save . . . I have trodden the winepress alone; . . . yea, I trod them in Mine anger, and trampled them in My fury; and their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, and I have stained all My raiment." This seems clearly to refer to a time and a work corresponding to the time and work here intended. No doubt, at this period Jesus is represented as thus treading the winepress of the vintage of the earth, chap. xiv. 17-20, "the winepress of the wrath of God," whence we are told "came out blood . . . even unto the bridles of the horses,"—the horses, doubtless, employed in the very battle between this royal Captain, whose garments were thus stained, and the beast with the kings of the earth. The very same time and work, the very same destruction, are specially referred to under the

sixth seal, chap. vi. 16, 17: "And they say to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of Their wrath is come; and who is able to stand?"

It has been suggested, indeed, that this description is given before the battle has been said to have taken place; and therefore the blood of self-sacrifice is more likely to have been intended. However, the symbolism may refer to what is determined to be done, as well as to what has actually been done. If Jesus were here viewed as acting throughout His entire history, first as a self-sacrificing Redeemer, and next as a righteous King and Judge, both views might be combined, and His own sacrificially shed blood, and the judicially shed blood of the persistent foes of His kingdom, might be intended. However, Christ is here expressly said to come forth, as the Saviour of His persecuted people indeed, really in the character of a royal Judge or for the very purpose of judging and making war in the spirit of perfect righteousness towards those who have long contended against Him in the persons of His loyal and devoted people. His functions as a Saviour and as a Judge are perfectly distinct. Both ought to be kept distinctly before the minds of all. Those of the Judge are certainly here set forth; and it is to be feared that, by adding those of the Saviour, the blending of two symbols into one would only tend to confusion of ideas and misinterpretation of the whole of this grand vision. How awful, then, this picture of Jesus Christ! Here He is "clothed with majesty and girt about with might." He comes to judge, to condemn, and to destroy. He will treat all with the most impartial justice. Those who have despised His goodness must experience His severity, yet that severity cannot in any case go beyond desert.

The vesture here alluded to is apt to be taken almost literally or personal and direct engagement in bloody conflict. Nothing of the kind ought for one moment to be imagined. The very same symbolism might, at least to no small extent, have been used of another judicial coming of Christ to deal with a very similar case,—that of His own apostate and persecuting people. In their case, too, His coming was most awful, even in order to judge, to condemn, and to destroy; only He had no army of saintly soldiers on white horses like Himself, and "clothed in fine linen, white (and) pure." Literally, He then "trode the winepress alone"; and yet in one sense no more "alone" than in the case before us; for "the armies" here spoken of, "which are in heaven," can be supposed to engage in no carnal

warfare. Their armour, as we shall find, is "armour of light" alone,—even that of what Christ has called "the righteousness of the kingdom of heaven," consisting of "fine linen, white (and) pure." The difficulty here is to account for the vesture of the great Leader, and of Him alone, being said to be tinged with blood, and for the description of the coming battle as that of evidently actual destruction, unless on the ground of carnal conflict and the use of carnal weapons. That the war is purely or exclusively spiritual seems quite untenable. Nor can we suppose the sword proceeding from the mouth of the Captain to be that alone which is used spiritually to convince of sin and to convert to God. Again and again, it is said to be used in the execution of judicial sentence, whether against corrupt Christians or against impenitent men. Yet, all seems sufficiently clear and simple, when we remember the real character of Christ as Saviour-King or Saviour-Judge. As such, He appears in the Gospel, and that most practically, as we have been considering, in His relation to His own nation, to whom He came as a Saviour, but to whom He afterwards came as a Judge. We have said much of the symbolism here used might have been used of Him and His apostate people. Suppose it had, then He and His followers would have formed the true spiritual army, whose soldiers carried no carnal weapon, and engaged in no carnal fight; whilst He Himself alone had a vesture stained with blood, or had a weapon which could literally kill, or rather cause to be killed, even the sword of His mouth. But how did, or could, that judicial sword cause His enemies to be literally wounded or killed?

In Scripture, illustrations abound everywhere. *Exod. xv. 1-21*: "I will sing unto Jehovah, for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea. . . . Jehovah is a Man of war. . . . Thy right hand hath dashed in pieces the enemy. . . . The enemy said, I will pursue . . . I will draw my sword; my hand shall destroy them. . . . Thou stretchedst out Thy right hand, the earth swallowed them." Jehovah commanded the deadly elements, and they obeyed the word of His mouth; or, as here, *ver. 21*, the Egyptians "were killed with the sword . . . which came forth out of His mouth." Perhaps the best and most suitable illustration will be found in what is said of "the burden of Babylon," so thoroughly parallel to this judgment of mystic Babylon, by Isaiah and Jeremiah. *Isaiah xiii. 4, 5*: "The noise of a tumult of the kingdom of the nations gathered together! The Lord of hosts mustereth the host for the battle. They come from a far country. . . . (*vers. 17-19*). Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them

. . . and (their) bows shall dash the young men to pieces. . . . And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms . . . shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah,"—connected with chap. xlv. 24; chap. xlv. 2, "Thus saith Jehovah, thy Redeemer. . . . I am Jehovah that maketh all things . . . that saith of Jerusalem, She shall be inhabited . . . that saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers: that saith of Cyrus, (He is) My Shepherd, and shall perform all My pleasure: even saying of Jerusalem, She shall be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. Thus saith Jehovah to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him, and I will loose the loins of kings; to open the doors before him, and the gates shall not be shut. . . . I will break in pieces the doors of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron; and I will give thee the treasures of darkness . . . that thou mayest know that I am Jehovah, which call thee by name, even the God of Israel. For Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel My chosen, I have called thee by thy name." Here, as in the case of the Captain of the hosts of the true Israel and the fall of the mystical Babylon, we find Jehovah of hosts using the sword of His mouth, calling for Cyrus and Darius, and their armies of Persians and Medes, to overthrow the armies of Babylon, to enter the gates and to take and destroy the city, and thus to let captive Israel go free, that the city and temple of Jerusalem might be rebuilt, and the nation of Israel re-established in their own land. In like manner, the great Captain on the white horse stirred up the emperor and people of Rome to execute judgment on the Jewish nation for the rejection of their own Messiah, and for the persecution of His own Church or people. And so we may see Him, as in this vision, using the sword of His mouth, by making use of the swords of the nations to fulfil His purpose in the destruction of Antichrist and the antichristian kings and peoples. But, it may be asked, if such be the case, if He uses the sword of His mouth by using the carnal weapons of men, in what sense can "the armies which are in heaven," or His own spiritual and peace-loving followers, be said to be engaged in the terrible and deadly coming contest at all?

To settle this point, we must keep in view three things: *First*, that though the symbol is that of one great and final battle, the intended reality is that of a long-continued warfare issuing in such a complete destruction of mystical Babylon as is here declared; *secondly*, during that long period, the spiritual army, with the sole armour of righteousness, really does the greatest, the most constant, and the most daring part of the contest, that of doing righteously and

suffering for righteousness' sake, that of using no carnal weapon and yet being exposed to the carnal weapons of the foe; and, *thirdly*, this spiritual army may be said, as it is sometimes said, to do what is really done for them or on their account. Thus Micah, v. 7, 8: "And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples as dew from the Lord, as showers upon the grass; that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of man,"—evidently as a spiritual people and under Him who (ver. 2) comes out from Bethlehem to be the Ruler of Israel, most certainly the true David, "whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting"; and evidently also as exerting the most gentle and peaceful influence over the many peoples among whom they are dispersed; and yet, mark what immediately follows: "And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations, in the midst of many peoples"—that is, the same peaceful people among the same hostile peoples, "as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and there is none to deliver"—what that remnant, so few and feeble, could neither be nor do; and what would be utterly inconsistent with their silent, gentle, peaceful, loving influence, implied in their being "as the dew from Jehovah, as showers upon the grass"; and, therefore, what they can be said to be and to do only as God is and does or makes certain of these peoples to be and to do for them or on their account. Of the principle here involved, we might give various illustrations from the Old Testament.

We need not go beyond the limits of this Book. What is said of the power of the two witnesses might be referred to. However, what is here said of Christ as ruling with a rod of iron, connected with the promise given to every Christian conqueror (chap. ii. 26, 27), even "authority over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron," where evidently he is to be viewed as one with Christ in ruling the unconverted peoples, and that with physical force, which, as we have already found, may be by the use of one people to rule or punish another, or even unconverted people to domineer over other unconverted people. How the rod is thus used, or described as thus used, we have an express example in Isa. x. 5, 6, "Ho Assyrian, the rod of Mine anger, the staff in whose hand is Mine indignation! I will send him against a profane nation, and against the people of My wrath will I give him a charge,"—in fact, "I will command him, and he shall be the rod or sword of My mouth." The parallel is complete: Jehovah uses Assyria, the rod of His anger, "the sword of His mouth," against

apostate Israel, as here Jesus uses some like carnal power or powers,—in fact, the red and black and pale horses of chap. vi.—as this rod of iron, the rod of His anger, “the sword of His mouth,” against apostate spiritual Israel, even Antichrist and his antichristian followers referred to in this chapter.

(4) “*And His name is called the Word of God.*” “This title forms,” says Alford, “so plain a link between the Apocalypse and St. John’s writings, where only it occurs, that various attempts have been made by those who reject his authorship, to deprive it of that significance.” This correctly refers to the name as common to all the writings of John. However, these writings best indicate the real meaning of this name, which we regard as the most significant, most comprehensive, most truly all-inclusive, name of Jesus Christ. It has been held to be expressive of the Divine reason or Divine wisdom. It suggests both, and yet means vastly more. The simplest idea which can be attached to ‘Ο ΛΟΓΟΣ, we have long regarded as the one intended. Just as we use words to express our thoughts or to reveal our minds or ourselves, so we take this name, the Word of God, to be used of Christ, the Revealer of God. No writer, whether of the Old or of the New Testament, has spoken of Christ so fully, so frequently, or so emphatically, as at once God, the self-revealing God, or, as we have said, the one all-comprehensive, all-perfect, Revealer of God. Hence various illustrative expressions of John, or of Christ recorded by him. Thus, “No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared (Him).” “I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life: no one cometh unto the Father but by Me. If ye had known Me, ye would have known My Father also: from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him. Philip saith unto Him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and dost not thou know Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I say unto you I speak not from Myself, but the Father abiding in Me doeth His works.” “I manifested Thy name unto the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world. . . . The words which Thou gavest Me I have given unto them. . . . I have given them Thy word, . . . O righteous Father, the world knew Thee not, but I knew Thee. And I made known unto them Thy name, and will make it known; that the love wherewith Thou lovedst me may be in them, and I in them.” “That which was from the beginning, that which we have

heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life; and the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal (life), which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true; and we are in Him that is true, (even) in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."

The key to all this Jesus gives: "I and My Father are one;" whilst all this, again, is a key to the sublime words, which most and best illustrate the meaning of this simple and sublime name, the Word of God: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that hath been made. . . . And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth." Here Jesus is finely and sublimely represented as, if we may so say, the God-revealing God, the Son who is one with the Father, who is yet in some absolutely incomprehensible way distinguished from the Father, the image of the Invisible God, the effulgence of His glory and the express likeness of His Person; "for in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Christ as the Word was not man, but God; and assumed the nature of man that He might reveal God. But, as the Word, He was with God, and was God before the earth was formed, nay, before one particle of the vast universe was created: for "the same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made." "In Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things have been created through Him, and unto Him; and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist." As the Creator of the universe, He breaks the eternal silence, He expresses the mind and will, and shows forth the inner glory of God; and He comes forth for the first time from the bosom of the Eternally Silent in His highest, truest, most glorious, and everlasting character of the Word of God. Thus has He ever been, and thus He shall ever be, the one and only medium of communication between the uncreated and the created universe; and now, and ever since, in the person of the glorified Saviour of mankind,

He took His place on the throne of the eternal and invisible Majesty on high; He is not only in the special and limited sense "the Mediator between God and man," but in the most profound and unlimited sense the Mediator between God and the entire created universe.

Again we may say, "The key to all this Jesus gives": "I and My Father are one." Well, therefore, is it here said, "*His Name is called, THE WORD OF GOD.*" We often call the Sacred Scriptures by this very name; sometimes "the written Word," to distinguish them from Him whom we then call "the Living Word." However, to Him alone, in all the unsearchable and inestimable wealth of its meaning, belongs this ineffably glorious name. Well has it been said that it is most appropriately here introduced, since this great Warrior appears as entering the field of special conflict with Antichrist and the antichristian powers, whose great strength has ever lain in the concealment of the Book of Divine Revelation, in the concealment of "the truth as it is in Jesus," in the usurpation of the place of this God-revealing "Word of God." Never was Christ more highly prized by all His most intelligent and true-hearted followers, as "The Word of God." And never was He more truly and deeply needed as such everywhere, and especially by those who are foremost in the ranks of science and philosophy, than at the present day; and to many of whom the heavens have ceased to show forth the glory of God or the firmament His handiwork, and whose science and philosophy have landed them in the cold, dark, cheerless and hopeless region of religious agnosticism or know-nothingism—illustrative of the words of the Apostle: "The world by wisdom knew not God"; and of Christ Himself: "The world hath not known Thee"; and showing to both Church and world wherein the true strength and real salvation of both alone lie, even in this very apocalypse and going forth of this now many-diademed Warrior, whose "name is called, The Word of God."

(5) "*And the armies which are in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white (and) pure.*" Many regard these as the risen saints, who have ascended to heaven or who have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and who return with Him to this world and thus follow Him on white horses clothed in garments of fine linen; whilst some add even angels of light. Both Leader and followers appear in their glorified state or in those glorious resurrection-bodies which are immortal and so absolutely invulnerable. All such interpreters, we hold, here entirely miss the mark, and give such a view of this wonderful vision as might well

suffice to prove that their whole pre-millennial theory is nothing else than a perfectly baseless fabric of a purely human vision, which could convey no real knowledge, no conception of any reality in heaven or on earth to any thoughtful mind. The very idea of Christ coming down in all the glory of His personal presence followed by a countless army of glorified and immortal and absolutely invulnerable men, to enter a literal field of battle with Antichrist and his numerous, yet poor, puny, mortal followers; and of these puny creatures, however mighty their leader or leaders, daring to meet in desperate combat so mighty and so terrible a celestial host, might well and most reasonably put all possible belief at perfect defiance. Far more reasonable to believe it possible for the Infinitely Wise to send down from heaven the highest angel with a most solemn commission to execute the awful sentence of death upon a literal worm! This terrestrial army, consisting of the whole human race, if any will, yet clothed in their frail tenements of clay, though led on by some mighty human being in some sense raised from the dead, as has been supposed, or even by the great red dragon himself in some visible and even most Godlike form, would be an army of heroes indeed, if they could possibly dare to encounter the very armies of heaven. The whole human race gathered together to fight, not in moral opposition, but in physical combat, all who have been converted to God from age to age, now clothed with immortal powers and led by their Almighty Redeemer! How unthinking men—or, rather, men bound not to think—can receive the most self-contradictory and monstrous doctrine of transubstantiation, one can comprehend; but that the very best of Christians can not only accept, but glory in, the idea of their glorious Lord literally coming down from heaven, with, not “ten thousand of His saints,” but many millions of the redeemed, now possessing, like Himself, “the power of an endless life,” to engage in what must be called—the inconceivable inequality of the combatants being considered—the most inglorious battle which imagination could so much as think of, seems beyond all comprehension; and, unless for their own express testimony, beyond all belief. How sad that a Book of Divine inspiration and most marvellous construction should be for a moment supposed, by its warmest friends and the sincerest followers and worshippers of Jesus Christ, to contain so terribly degrading as well as most fearfully false a representation of the Lord of glory and the innumerable company of the perfectly redeemed!

How strange that so many and so excellent Christians should fail to suspect the correctness of an interpretation involving such

a conception of Christ! The real cause of all this confusion of mind and wildness of imagination in the treatment of this and other like sublime visions of this Book, whose correct and sober interpretation amounts, we most assuredly hold, to a perfect demonstration of its Divine inspiration, is to be traced to a twofold origin,—to the study of the Book under a totally mistaken view of the Second Coming of Christ, and to a frequent and even frightful confounding of the symbols with the things symbolised. Perhaps nowhere does the fearfully disastrous consequence more strikingly appear than in the most extravagant misinterpretation of this vision; and, in fact, of all the closing chapters of this otherwise grand, doubt-dispelling, faith-establishing, heart-warming, and soul-cheering and inspiring Book. “*The armies which are in heaven*,”—“which are *in* heaven,”—not “which come *from* heaven.” Their Leader alone is said to come *from* heaven. And why, then, are they said to be *in* heaven at all? This is no solitary description of all true Christians whilst they live on earth. What is meant by “the kingdom of heaven,” in the simple language of the gospels, and of Christ Himself? The expression certainly points to the kingdom of God or of Christ, which, like the resurrection body of every Christian, is “eternal in the heavens”; but it as certainly means the kingdom of Christ and of God in this present and passing world, and which can possibly be entered by no natural birth, but, “the Faithful and True Witness” Himself testifying, by a Divine, spiritual, and heavenly birth alone. All so born or so renewed are as truly and as naturally ushered into “the kingdom of heaven” and so “are *in* heaven,” as are all naturally born on earth ushered into one or other of the kingdoms of the world, and so are *in* that kingdom. The kingdoms *in* heaven and *on* earth are not *two* kingdoms, but *one* and *the same* kingdom.

The true King is as really, though not as visibly, within this kingdom on earth as He is within the same kingdom in heaven. The Christian, when he goes from earth to heaven, no more goes from one heavenly kingdom to another, than does a British subject go from one British Empire to another when he goes from England to India or to any other part of that empire. Simple as this is, we are all too apt to overlook or to forget it. All Christians would do well, both for the purity of their life and for the peace of their death, if they daily remembered that they are already *in* heaven, even now form a part of “the armies which are in heaven”; and remembered also that, therefore, their great, nay, their sole,

work, the most excellent and glorious of all work, was just that here so simply and so grandly set forth in symbolic picture, of following close after their invincible Leader, and of seeking that their truly unearthly armour should wax brighter and brighter, or, in the words before us, that their garments of fine linen may not only be kept "unspotted from the world," but wax whiter and purer, "the fine linen" being—as we find infallibly interpreted in this very chapter—the true Christian or Christlike character and conduct of the warriors, "the righteousness of saints." He who lives best fights best. As already said, this fine linen is at once the dress of the bride and the armour of these warriors. The bride of Christ and the army or armies of Christ are the one and the same true Church of Christ. The bride, in proportion as she is beautiful in herself, and beautiful in her robe of righteousness and garment of salvation, conquers the world for her Bridegroom and King.

We might have referred to many passages of Scripture, all bearing upon this important point. We might quote Eph. vi. 10-20, where we are told of "the whole armour of God," of "wrestling . . . against the principalities and the powers, . . . against the spiritual (hosts) of wickedness in the heavenly (places)," implying that these Christians so armed are regarded as here "*in* heaven," or *in* these "heavenly (places)." Also we have here "the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit." We might specially refer to Gal. iv. 26: "The Jerusalem which is *above* is free, which is our mother," a verse of importance as a key to this very vision and to the meaning of the whole of chapters xxi. and xxii., as suggesting the unity of the Church on earth and in heaven, and showing in what sense the New Jerusalem may be said to come down from heaven to earth. Again, Phil. iii. 20: "Our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." As citizens of heaven, they may well be regarded as in a real sense to be, like the armies in question, "*in* heaven." So Eph. ii. 4-6: "God, being rich in mercy, . . . even when we were dead through our trespasses, quickened us together with Christ . . . and raised us up with Him, and made us sit with Him in the heavenly (places), in Christ Jesus,"—Christians thus sit with Christ in heaven; and Christ walks with Christians on earth. Once more, things as well as persons on earth are said to be in heaven or to be "*above*, where Christ is";—(Col. iii. 1-7), where "the things *which are above*" are to be sought, as the "members *which are upon the*

earth " are to be mortified or made dead, even all kinds of sinful passion and sinful pursuit. *The things above* are thus all things to be sought or done by the Christian as "a new man"; whilst *the things which are on the earth* are those to be avoided or denied by him as called upon to "put off the old man."

We need not wonder, then, or in the slightest degree think it strange, that Christians following Christ on earth, and with Him at war with Antichrist and antichristian people, should be symbolically represented here as "the armies which are in heaven upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white (and) pure," and following their Divine Commander here also symbolically represented thus,—*"I saw the heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He that sat thereon, called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He doth judge and make war."* We have quoted the words that we may remark, as might have been remarked before, that this heavenly King and Judge and Captain is not so much as said to come out of heaven at all, but simply to be seen on His white horse and with His many diadems, when John was made to see "the heaven opened." We do not wish to press the point in the way of argument, but to call attention to this more accurate view of the picture, that we may suggest that "the heaven opened" may here, as in some other parts of this Book, refer to the kingdom or Church of Christ, viewed as "the kingdom of heaven" on earth, *of* which He is Head or Centre or King; *in* which, therefore, He may be here represented as being; and *from* which, accordingly, He did not need to be said or in any way set forth as coming. The word "heaven" is used in so many senses, or under such varied aspects, in this Book, that the greatest care is required to determine in all cases its real force. As the result of such careful investigation and reflection may be gathered the meaning just suggested, and implying no such exit as has been erroneously supposed to be here represented.

(6) *"And out of His mouth proceedeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron."* With both of these clauses we have dealt already. Whatever may be said of this sword as a convincing and converting power, wounding only to heal, or killing only to make alive, here we must take it as used for judicial purposes alone; or, as here said, to "smite the nations," the unconverted and antichristian nations, which, at this peculiar crisis, are chiefly, if not solely, intended. This sword belongs to Him and is used by Him, as King and Judge as well as Saviour, from the very beginning of His reign, as is clearly indicated in the very first of these visions, that of the seven

golden candlesticks, and as is fully implied in the words addressed to the Church in Pergamum, "Repent; or else I will come to thee quickly, and I will make war against them,"—even those "that hold the teaching of Balaam,"—"with the sword of My mouth." He will come, as in this vision, to judge and condemn and punish, and therefore to use the needful means of punishment.

It is a very great mistake to regard the use of this sword as peculiar to the coming and even exclusively millennial period, as we find Mr. Guinness doing, even considering it as actually pointing to a dispensation really new and very unlike the present, and thus as giving strong support to the pre-millennial theory. As illustrative of a very fallacious mode of arguing, we may quote the following ("Approaching End of the Age," pp. 49, 50):—"If the coming here prefigured be an event belonging in any sense to this dispensation, it should harmonise with the known actions and operations of Christ during this dispensation. It does not do this; it is, on the contrary, in abrupt and violent contrast to them. The line of action here ascribed to the Lord Jesus, and the line of action which we know Him to have been pursuing ever since His incarnation, are so antagonistic, as to preclude their characterising one and the same dispensation. In the *vision*, 'in righteousness He doth judge'; in *this age*, in grace He refuses to judge, saying 'I came not to judge'; 'Man, who made Me a judge over you'? 'I judge no man'; 'Neither do I condemn thee.' In the vision, in righteousness He makes war; in this age, in grace He makes peace: He came to bring peace on earth, 'He is our peace,' 'He is the Prince of peace.' In the vision, 'out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations'; in this dispensation we are not smitten, but renewed by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever; the gospel does not smite the nations, but quickens and blesses them. In the vision, 'He ruleth the nations with a rod of iron'; in this age Christ does not ostensibly 'rule' the *nations* at all, for Satan is the god of this world; but if He did, He would rule them in grace and by love, even as He rules His Church, and not by the iron rod of inflexible righteousness; He spares the nations, He is kind to the unthankful and unworthy, His longsuffering is salvation. In the vision, 'He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God,' that is, He executes the holy indignation of God against sinners; in this dispensation, He manifests the *love* of God to a guilty world, He receives gifts even for the rebellious, He beseeches sinners to be reconciled to God. Who would even think of describing Christ's present actions in the words of this vision?

The coming here prefigured cannot, then, be an event of this age at all,—it is the inauguration of a future age.”

On all this we would make the following observations:—

First. We are perfectly amazed that Mr. Guinness, or any intelligent student of Scripture, or even any one at all acquainted with the nature of the Christian dispensation, could possibly have drawn out, or so much as thought of, such a contrast. The contrast is purely imaginary, and without one inch of ground on which to stand. The two lines of action on the part of Christ, here spoken of as “so antagonistic as to preclude their characterising one and the same dispensation,” may be parallel lines which never meet, and so to come into antagonistic contact; but they certainly run on together from the ascension of Jesus to the present time, and, we are assured, to the consummation of all things. Mr. Guinness here fails to distinguish between the personal ministry of Christ on earth up to the Crucifixion, and His subsequent ministry at the right hand of God, not only as a Saviour of sinners and a King of saints, but also as “the ruler of the kings of the earth,” God having “put all things in subjection under His feet, and given Him to be Head over all things to the Church.”

Secondly. To all that is above affirmed of Christ of a saving nature few would object: with almost nothing denied of Christ of a judicial nature would almost any agree. We might go so far as to maintain, that Jesus could not possibly carry on His saving work without carrying on His judicial work. How could He save His people without dealing judicially with their enemies and persecutors! How could He carry on the work of personal salvation, without daily judging and daily acting according to His judgment? Jesus gives a most awful view of His judicial procedure in the case of His own professedly real servants: Matt. xxiv. 48-54. “But if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My Lord tarrieth; and shall begin to beat his fellow-servants, and shall eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come . . . in an hour when he knoweth not, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” That individual man is judged, condemned, punished, not at the general judgment alone and long afterwards, but after he becomes a careless, wicked, and impenitent sinner. All the grace and mercy and peace which Mr. Guinness affirms *first*, and all the judicial procedure and punishment which he denies *next*, are absolutely necessary for the good of both Church and world, whilst both are essential characteristics of the present dispensation. We have referred

already to the threatened coming of Christ to judge and to "make war" against a corrupt portion of the Church in Pergamum "with the sword of His mouth." Surely this Church, one of the seven golden candlesticks, which have long ago been "removed out of its place," belonged to this present dispensation, one distinguishing characteristic of which, according to Mr. Guinness is, that Christ never acts the part of a judge, and has no "sword proceeding out of His mouth with which to smite the nations." It is strange that the vision of the first chapter, which symbolises what Christ is as the Head of those early Churches and of all like Churches, Churches certainly under the present dispensation, should have been thus entirely forgotten, and so very prominent and awful a feature of the symbolic picture totally overlooked. Why, the solemn warning, "The Judge is at the door," is literally and undeniably true of every moment of our lives—aye, and that with this very sword proceeding out of His mouth; and, we may say, too often very visible to the guilty consciences of Christians who do not follow the Saviour so closely as not to see the Judge, aye, as not to see this very sword, a very ugly as well as terrible thing, which Christ has no wish to have, but which inconsistent Christians and persistently impenitent sinners literally compel Him to have and to show and to use, in order to do what His compassionate heart abhors to do, even "His strange work," the work of dealing justly and of making war with this very sword against those whom He died to redeem.

Thirdly. By anticipation we have suggested our only remaining observation, that almost every feature, which Mr. Guinness has denied of the present dispensation, is set forth symbolically and thus practically affirmed of it in the first vision just referred to. There we see this very sword, which Mr. Guinness will allow to be—nay, treats as—a symbol of judicial authority. There, too, are the "eyes as a flame of fire," certainly not those of One all love and gentleness and peace, whose glow is never, "in this age," the glow of righteous indignation and judicial wrath against the persecutors and murderers of His people. There, too, are the "feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined," or rather burnt, "in a furnace," bright and glowing, and ready to tread down all His foes, as He is said to tread the great winepress. And if not in this first vision, we find it clearly set forth in one of the seven epistles, that He has received of His Father to rule the nations with a rod of iron; whilst in chap. xii. 5 we are told that the Child of the Church or "Woman in heaven arrayed with the sun, and the moon under her feet," "the Man Child," "the Strong Son of God," was born

for one great purpose at least, even "to rule the nations with a rod of iron,"—to do, in fact, what the promised Messiah is expressly said to do, in Psalm ii., which all take to be most certainly prophetic of Him,—even "to break the nations with a rod of iron, and to dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel"; aye, and for a very good purpose too—that, through the judicial treatment of those who persist in "setting themselves against Jehovah, and against His Messiah," He may thus practically and powerfully say, "Now *therefore* be wise, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. . . . Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish in the way, for His wrath may soon be kindled. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." Isa. xxvi. 9, 10: "When Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness." But, why not mercy without judgment in this present dispensation of grace and power? "Let favour,—grace and peace,—be shown to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness will he deal wrongfully, and will not behold the Majesty of Jehovah." Jesus must be a Judge, and use the rod of iron and the sword of His mouth, if He would "speak peace to the peoples," and be their Saviour.

(7) "*And He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God.*" Here we have the present tense, as if to indicate that He has already engaged in this special and most awful work of judicial indignation. Naturally we should identify this work with that of the apparently approaching battle, and regard the battle itself as very terrible, uninterrupted, short, and most decisive. We are apt to forget that, in many of these visions, what may have taken a long time to develop, or to come to a final issue, is symbolically represented in its full height, or as effected by one mighty work rather than by a whole series of less remarkable operations. Such we take to be the case with this great and awful winepress of wrath. In looking along the line of prophetic vision, instead of beholding such a succession of judicial works, all ending in one complete and final result, John is made to see one vast and most indescribably awful battle, yet really representing the mighty sum of all the battles from first to last carried on in order to the one Divinely intended end. In this way, many a winepress may have been trodden, for ages and through many a contest, involving altogether a vast effusion of blood—blood which, if all shed in the many battles had been literally, as here symbolically, shed in one most tremendous battle, would have been not unfitly described as, in chap. xiv. 20, "rising to the very bridles of the horses."

If this mode of symbolic description be overlooked or rejected, the consequence, we are persuaded, will be that the whole structure of this Book will be misconceived, and a correct and harmonious interpretation rendered impossible. We may note, in passing, that we have here an instructive illustration of another characteristic of the Apocalypse, namely, that the same object is sometimes presented under such different symbolic forms, as to appear at first view as so many different objects, unless the means of identification supplied are carefully marked and considered. At present we refer to "the great winepress of the wrath of God," chap. xiv. 19, 20, and the great contest of which we have been so far treating, and which is most awfully spoken of in the subsequent paragraph, as supplying the food for "the great supper of God." This great contest, which many regard as one and one only, and which they are anticipating with awful horror, we regard as in progress even now, and as having been so for ages past, though the vision would seem to represent the great Captain and His armies as coming forth almost immediately before the event. We keep most literally by the present tense, "He treadeth the winepress," not either He hath trodden, or He will tread. He has been and is so doing, and He will continue so to do, till all the antichristian forces have been utterly destroyed, and Babylon, the antichristian capital, has been laid in ruins for ever and ever. We shall not here pause to give a striking historical illustration of what we mean to all who, like Mr. Guinness, hold Rome to be specially intended, by pointing to the wars which preceded the total loss of the temporal kingdom and crown of the Pope,—even the war of France and Italy against Austria, the war of Prussia against Austria, the war of France against Germany, and the final and forceful entrance into Rome, where the Pope now confines himself to his own dwelling as a martyr-captive and subject, lawlessly and impiously despoiled of his temporal kingdom and crown.

One thing only shall we remark—namely, that all do well to form a correct conception of what is really meant by judicial wrath, the just wrath of a king, or the wrath here so awfully affirmed of God. The very word is so fearful on the one hand, and so suggestive of personal human wrath on the other, that many have concluded that no such thing can justly be affirmed of God at all. With the word the idea of hatred in a state of the intensest emotion is almost invariably associated. In the case of the wrath of a human king of the very highest character, and most intense and tender benevolence, it may be entertained and expressed in the most unexceptional spirit and manner. All just and impartial law defines the real

desert of crime. At the same time it announces the corresponding mind of the king. The declared punishment may be said to be the practical expression of the royal wrath against the transgressor. When the king sanctions the execution of the law, he thus expresses that royal wrath. He may do so without one particle of hatred, nay, with the deepest compassion and with many tears for the miserable culprit. That culprit has simply compelled his benevolent and noble-hearted king to do what he intensely dislikes to do, and yet what an absolute necessity is laid upon him to do. The king may intensely hate the crime, show his judicial wrath against it, and yet be inexpressibly sorry for the criminal. Such we take to be a feeble and very imperfect illustration of what is meant by the awful expression, "the wrath of God."

(8) "*And He hath on His garment and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.*" Thus closes this wonderful picture of Christ. As a picture of the great Antagonist of Antichrist, it is most striking and truly perfect. This title expresses, in the completest and most comprehensive form, His claims to absolute and universal dominion over the whole world, the very dominion claimed in His name and most impiously usurped by the Antichrist whom He comes forth to overthrow and destroy. Once, in terrible mockery, and in the day of His deepest humiliation, and yet to throw contempt upon His hypocritical and cruel accusers and murderers, a heathen "wrote a title, and put it on His cross, JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS"; and the Jews were more than ashamed to acknowledge such a king. Now, as here, He may be seen, all but visibly, by many millions of loving and admiring eyes, riding forth in glorious majesty, His many diadems on His sacred head, this most truthful name on His imperial vesture, "King of kings and Lord of lords," Himself winning and conquering all hearts, and putting crowns of life and righteousness and glory on the heads of all who love Him. Still, His full conquest is by no means won. He here appears as going forth to war. A great usurper of His throne, a terrible destroyer of His people, must be cast down, before the nations of the earth shall own His sway; and He will not cease to fight till He has fully conquered, and till all the falsely claimed and usurped dominion of the adversary shall have been entirely and finally abolished.

3. *Vers. 17-21.* "And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in mid heaven, Come (and) be gathered together unto the great supper of God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty

men, and the flesh of horses and of them that sit thereon, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, and small and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat upon the horse, and against His army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought the signs in his sight, wherewith he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image: they twain were cast alive into the lake of fire which burneth with brimstone: and the rest were killed with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse, (even the sword) which came forth out of His mouth: and all the birds were filled with their flesh."

(1) The great battle is thus anticipated. The marriage supper of the Lamb presents to us the wonderful prosperity and happiness of the Christian Church, when "the days of her mourning," because of her widowhood during the long antichristian period, "are ended." Another and most awful supper is here announced, called "The Supper of God," simply because He gives it, or makes provision for it. But, as the one supper sets forth, we may say, the resurrection of the true Church, called afterwards "The First Resurrection," the other sets forth the complete and final destruction of all the persevering upholders of the antichristian system. John sees an angel standing in the sun, calling all the birds of prey to gather together, that they might have a most terrible feast. No feast is provided for the foes of Christ. They are to be the feast of every unclean bird. We do not suppose that the appearance of the angel in his peculiar position is of itself symbolical; or is aught else than a part of this one symbolical picture. In such a picture we must not attempt to find some special meaning in all the details. Ezekiel has drawn a like picture of the terrible destruction of a like enemy of Israel: chap. xxxix., "Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I am against thee, O Gog . . . I will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel: and I will smite thy bow out of thy left hand, and cause thine arrows to fall out of thy right hand . . . and I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. . . . And thou, son of man, speak unto the birds of every sort, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come: gather yourselves on every side to My sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh and drink blood. Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth. . . And I will set my glory among the nations, and all the nations shall see My judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid upon

them." Instead of a supper, we have here a sacrifice. Though flesh and blood are spoken of, and war doubtless implied, the slaughter is ascribed to God alone, as here to the sword of the mouth of the Rider on the white horse. However, in chap. xxxviii. 21-3 Jehovah is said to use various means of destruction, "And I will call for a sword against him unto all My mountains, saith the Lord God: every man's sword shall be against his brother. And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his hordes, and the many peoples that are with him, an overflowing shower, and great hailstones, fire and brimstone." Thus war, along with the destructive powers of nature, is said to be employed.

What we would specially notice is that, whilst all are said to come to fight against Israel, and whilst Israel is not said to fight against them at all, it is clearly indicated that the allied armies will be destroyed, not by might of those whom they unite to assail, but by mutual conflict: "*Every man's sword shall be against his brother.*" This must be kept in view if we would rightly understand the nature of the rod of iron, or the sword of the mouth of the great Captain, who really wields the swords of the allied nations or armies of Antichrist against one another; civil war as well as international war will thus be employed. Both have been employed to a large extent already, as might be historically illustrated. Again and again has Antichrist suffered through the wars of his own peoples. France furnishes many an example. The great Revolution will never be forgotten as a most impressive illustration. This vision of Ezekiel corresponds more fully to that of Gog and Magog, the enemies of the Church (chap. xx. 7—10) after the Millennium, but is in keeping with that here set forth. All men, all classes of men, high and low, bond and free, are doomed to perish; implying that antichristian nations are to have their slaves, personal, political or spiritual, just as we find said of the same period under the sixth seal. We may repeat that we must not take the great battle here referred to as symbolising one and only one great fight. It rather represents one long-continued conflict, carried on from age to age, and whose results, or rather the sum of whose consecutive results, may be said to be put under the head of one vast contest. We may repeat, not a few are looking forward for some such awful battle, far more vast and terrible than any battle of the past, altogether unaware of the fact that the battle has been long raging, and that all those who are now contending "for the faith once delivered to the saints" are in the very midst of it. On the principle of mutual

destruction, to which we have pointed, how many kings, and captains, and mighty men, and all classes of men, have fallen in the wars of Europe, since the great war began at the era of the Reformation! How long the war will continue to rage before the antichristian powers shall utterly perish, we cannot tell. The great Leader's sword shall find out all His enemies, all persistent impenitent ones; and none can escape. Happy are those who are of those armies which follow in His train!

Perhaps it may be well here to give a most striking historical illustration of the mutual destruction of antichristian forces, and that to the wonderful deliverance of the friends of the gospel. It is fully given in D'Aubigné's History, Vol. III., chaps. i. and ii., from which we may quote the following:—"We have witnessed the commencement, the struggles, the reverses, and the progress of the Reformation. . . . We are now entering upon a new period,—that of general battles. . . . The passage from the Middle Ages to modern times has arrived. . . . Protestantism is about to take a new step. It is about to become a body, and thus attack with greater energy that 'mystery of iniquity' which for ages has taken bodily shape at Rome, in the very temple of God. . . . It is to the Protest of Spires (1529) that we are now about to turn our eyes. . . . The formal establishment of Protestantism remains the great fact that prevails in the history of the Reformation from 1526 to 1529. The Duke of Brunswick had brought into Germany the threatening message of Charles the Fifth. That Emperor was about to repair from Spain to Rome, to come to an understanding with the Pope, and from thence to pass into Germany to constrain the heretics. . . . The decisive hour for the Reformation was on the point of striking. On the 25th June, 1526, the diet opened. . . . Never had the hostility which the Romish partisans entertained against the evangelical princes appeared in so striking a manner. . . . Never also had the evangelical princes showed so much hope. . . . Their first step was to ask for a place of worship. . . . All the followers of the evangelical princes wore these letters embroidered on their right sleeves: V. D. M. I. Æ. (*Verbum Domini manet in æternum*), 'The Word of the Lord endureth for ever.' . . . The word of God—such from this moment was the palladium of the Reformation. . . . This firmness in the friends of the Reformation produced results that surpassed their expectation. It was no longer possible to be deceived: the spirit that was manifested in these men was the spirit of the Bible. Everywhere the sceptre was falling from the hands of Rome. . . . The Commissioners made their report: people were astonished at

it. Never had men spoken out so freely against the pope and the bishops. . . . Then Rome, which had appeared to slumber, awoke. . . . Ferdinand, on the 3rd August, published the decree drawn up more than four months previously in favour of the Edict of Worms. . . . The effect of the imperial ordinance was immense. . . . The Reformation appeared as if it would enter immediately upon a contest with the pope and Charles the Fifth. But it is not yet prepared for a general struggle. . . . A spirit of blindness . . . seized upon the great enemy of the gospel; and thus it was that Divine Providence saved the Reformation in its cradle. . . . Years of peace were to be granted to it. Clement VII., whom Charles was about to visit . . . in order to receive the imperial crown in Rome itself, and from his sacred hands, and in return to give up to the pontiff the gospel and the Reformation,—Clement VII., seized with a strange infatuation, had suddenly turned against this powerful monarch. The emperor . . . had opposed his claims on the states of the Duke of Ferrara. Clement immediately became exasperated . . . and hastened to have recourse to political combinations. . . . Charles did not hesitate. He wheeled to the right as quickly as the pope had done to the left, and turned abruptly towards the evangelical princes. . . . So strange a situation led of necessity to the desired solution: religious liberty. . . . The emperor immediately reaped the fruits of his new policy. No longer having his hands tied by Germany, he turned them against Rome. . . . Thus the puissant Charles, instead of marching with the pope against the Reformation, as he had threatened at Seville, marches with the Reformation against the pope. . . . Now began that terrible campaign during which the storm burst on Rome and on the Papacy that had been destined to fall on Germany and the Gospel. . . . A few slight advantages gained by the papal soldiers in the kingdom of Naples led to the conclusion of a truce that was to be ratified by the pope and by the emperor," who was advancing towards Rome from the south. "As soon as this was known, a frightful tumult broke out in the Constable's army," the army proceeding from the north. "The Spanish troops revolted, compelled him to flee, and pillaged his tent." He had to yield. "He had no alternative: besides, neither Charles nor Clement would listen to any proposals of peace. . . . Whilst the storm descending from the Alps was approaching the eternal city, the pope lost his presence of mind, sent away his troops, and kept only his body-guard. . . . On the evening of the 5th May the Constable arrived under the walls of the capital. . . . Wishing to encourage his soldiers, . . . he mounted the wall, and called on

them to follow him. At this moment a ball struck him: he fell, and expired an hour after. . . . His death, far from checking, served only to excite the army. . . . The gates were opened, the army poured in, the suburbs were taken, and the pope, surrounded by thirteen cardinals, fled to the Castle of St. Angelo. The Imperialists, at whose head was now the Prince of Orange, offered him peace on conditions of his paying 300,000 crowns. But Clement . . . rejected every proposition. After four hours' repose, the attack was renewed, and by sunset the army was master of the city. It remained under arms and in good order until midnight. . . . At last, seeing no demonstrations either of war or of peace, the soldiers disbanded and ran to pillage. Then began the famous 'Sack of Rome.' . . . Churches, palaces, private houses, basilicas, banks, tombs—everything was pillaged, even to the golden ring that the corpse of Julius II. still wore on its finger. . . . Clement VII. had called the Spaniards 'Moors,' and had published a plenary indulgence to whoever should kill any of them. Nothing, therefore, could restrain their fury. These faithful Catholics put prelates to death in the midst of horrible cruelties, designed to extort their treasures from them; they spared neither rank, sex, nor age. It was not until the sack had lasted ten days, and a booty of 10,000,000 of golden crowns had been collected, and from five to eight thousand victims had perished, that quiet began to be in some degree restored. . . . Clement VII. at last capitulated. He renounced every alliance against Charles V., and bound himself to remain a prisoner until he had paid the army 400,000 ducats. The evangelical Christians gazed with astonishment on this judgment of the Lord."

(2) "*And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat upon the horse, and His armies. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought the signs in his sight, wherewith he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image; they twain were cast alive into the lake of fire which burneth with brimstone.*" Here it will be observed that the antichristian powers are the assailants. They are gathered together to fight against the great Captain and His army—He at once repels the attack and overthrows the foe. Perhaps we should not make much of the order of the conquest,—*first*, the seizure of the false king and false prophet; and *secondly*, the destruction of the rest by the sword of the great Leader. The order may be that of importance rather than that of fact. Only after the overthrow of the

army is it usual for the commander to be taken captive. What is meant by being "taken alive"? If used literally, the words would be easily understood. But here, both king and prophet are symbolical persons, or successions of persons. The seizure is not therefore purely personal. The false prophet would best be thus seized by being proved false. The proof that he is false would prove the king supported by him to be false; and the proof of the antichristian character of the king would, in like manner, demonstrate the like character of the prophet. Now, let Christ and His army be presented face to face with Antichrist and his army; and the glory of the one will be the confusion, the detection, the seizure, and the utter destruction of the other. The great work of the bride and of the army of Christ, one and the same body, is simply to adorn herself for her Lord, or to follow the great Captain robed in "fine linen, white and pure," "the righteousness of saints," "the whole armour of God," "the armour of light," "the armour of righteousness on the right hand and the left," and so to appear as the followers of the Lamb, or so show as if visible, their invisible Leader, and then, as we have said, the glory of the one will be the confusion, the seizure and the destruction of the other.

In this important sense the beast and the false prophet will be detected and taken first by the contrast between them and the true King and Prophet of Israel, as seen in and through the spirit and character and conduct of His followers, at once His army and His bride. Such is the present work of these followers. They are to "arise and shine." They are to "awake, put on their strength and their beautiful garments," and to appear as indeed "the New Jerusalem, the Holy City," into which, through separation from the world, "henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised or the unclean." Then the contrast between restored Jerusalem, "the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, with His 144,000 sealed" and chosen and faithful followers, and "the great city Babylon," with its worldly grandeur, its false Christ followed by the deluded kings and peoples of the world, will show the truth of heaven to all who have eyes to see on earth. "The beast and the false prophet" will be taken. Their declared origin from "the abyss" will be perceived; and as soon as men are led to see their declared origin, they cannot help seeing their declared end. "The beast . . . is about to come out of the abyss, and to go into perdition." These thus return to the abyss, the home of Satan whence they came. "They twain were cast alive into the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone." They are utterly destroyed. They are "cast alive"; certainly not as

individual persons, as all such must die first, whether to go to the one place of destiny or to the other. These embody and represent the great antichristian system; and so long as they continue to represent it, or rather so long as it, in all its completeness, continues to be represented by them, as antichristians they remain alive. We need not say that a system infallible, unchangeable, at the last more complete than ever, can be said to be still alive, and to be the same, as no other which admits of change, decay, progress and reformation can. The Churches of the present day are not the real Churches of the Reformation. The latter do not now, and that most happily, live in the former. They have become more apostolic, more Christian and less antichristian. The imperfectly renewed Churches of the Reformation are really dead, and could not be called or "cast alive" anywhere at the present day. The Church of Rome is so alive, and, in her very refusal to change or amend, is alive, can be taken alive or treated in any way as alive. When she is seen universally to be the greatest living imposture, by being the greatest living misrepresentation of the true Church of Christ, she shall be taken "alive" only to cease to be for ever.

(3) "*And the rest were killed with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse, (even the sword) which came forth out of His mouth: and all the birds were filled with their flesh.*" In this battle, representing a long warfare, Christ and His army gain many a victory by conversion from the followers of Antichrist, and by means of their spiritual weapons. "The beast and false prophet" are detected, and no longer followed by them. Many suffer from age to age by wars, pestilence, and the like, as seen in the vision of Ezekiel, and as we have above shown, they have thus been slain, according to the judgment of Jesus, and by "the sword of His mouth." In the language of figure, their flesh has been given to every carnivorous beast and bird.

Such is the end of the corrupt Church and kingdom of Antichrist, to be followed by the restoration of the true Church and kingdom of Christ, which shall then enjoy all the prosperity, blessedness and glory of the millennial reign of the true King of the Israel of God. This destruction of the predicted "man of sin," this "lawless one," the usurper of the throne of Christ and destroyer of His people, here and thus described, is to be identified with the like judicial destruction of the sixth seal, of the seventh trumpet, of the great winepress of Divine indignation, of the seven vials or bowls of the last plagues, of the triumph of the Lamb and His called and chosen and faithful followers, of the full and final destruction of Babylon, of the special

judgment of Daniel and of this Book. Next follows the vision of the Church of "the first resurrection" of millennial blessedness and glory.

We might have given one or more illustrations of the great and protracted warfare summed up under the symbol of one terrible and final battle, as all the strifes and contests and wars connected with the progress of the gospel, and mainly rising out of it, all along the course of the Rider on the white horse, and up to the Millennium, are summed up under the one symbol of the rider on the red horse with the great sword which was given to him. Of such illustrations certainly the most complete and striking is that of the separation of the kingdom of England from the antichristian empire, and of the gradual and glorious transformation which, for three hundred years, has been going on. How many external wars have thus been excited! How many internal changes have been effected! What persecutions must be traced to the imperfect reformation of the Church, and the long-continued ignorance of the principles of civil and religious liberty! What sufferings have been most nobly endured by those to whose faithful and self-sacrificing testimony we are indebted for the glorious liberty which we now enjoy, and which has made Great Britain the glory of all lands, and, in ways too often overlooked, the intellectual, moral, social, political and religious instructress of the world! In this great war the memorable civil strifes of the Commonwealth and the Charleses will ever have a prominent place. But, if we look merely to carnal contests, however influential, and forget or overlook the more obscure, yet still more influential spiritual contests, inclusive of all those evangelical operations which have been the very redemption of our country, we cannot possibly understand the character of the warfare here symbolised, or even the nature of our own progress as a people. However advanced, the war still goes on. Rome still contends. The very Church, which has been long deemed and called "the bulwark of Protestantism," still retains so much of Rome within her own doctrines and constitution as to make her, even in the case of some of her illustrious sons, the very birthplace of Romanists. No wonder the war should yet continue! The enemy is within the camp. Nor does he fear to show his head, to hold up his standard, or to wield his weapons of war. The trumpet call from heaven itself, "Come forth, my people, out of her, that ye have no fellowship with her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues," is not addressed to the real Christians within the pale of the Romish Church alone. It ought to be heard by all Christians within all

Churches, and ought to lead them to seek the removal of all remaining errors and evil practices in these Churches, or to obey the literal words of this Divine command, "Come forth, My people, out of them." Only by constant religious as well as political reformation can Great Britain become truly one of those nations of the earth that walk in the light of the New Jerusalem—that is, in the light of pure and primitive, unmixed and unmodified Christianity.

We might have referred to the terrible and long-continued war, so vividly and powerfully delineated in Motley's "Rise of the Dutch Republic," as most highly illustrative of the great battle under review. That fearfully deadly contest, carried on in behalf of Rome, and with intensest bitterness, may well help those who are looking forward to some one great battle of inconceivable magnitude, to place themselves rather in the midst of the many battles of these ages, of which Rome has been the main and standing cause, and, as we have said, of which that symbolic battle sets forth the mighty sum.

One remark more. We might have referred to the history of the recent revival and unification of Italy and loss of the temporal power of the Pope. When we read of the kings and kingdoms of Antichrist as doomed to destruction, we are apt to conclude that the peoples themselves must be utterly destroyed.

We have already, and more than once, referred to the two ways in which an antichristian people may be destroyed: 1st, *spiritually*, by conversion to Christ, and so by defection from Antichrist; and 2nd, *politically*, when it suffers in virtue of its persistence in moral and religious error and wrong-doing. So it has been, in the former sense, with Popish England, which has perished by conversion, or through the rise and progress of Protestant England. So it has, up to this date, been with Popish Spain, in the latter sense, which, through most persistent and degrading adherence to all the despotic and persecuting religion of Rome, has fallen from the very highest to the very lowest place and condition among the kingdoms of Europe. Not a few have so misinterpreted this Book as to anticipate the literal destruction of the city of Rome. The doom of that material city, as the capital of the Pope, and that as Pope, is already past. It has literally, and, we trust, for ever fallen, and that in one day, over which we have seen Cardinal Manning lamenting. When the army of Victor Emmanuel—strange name—entered the gates, and when the material city perished as the capital of the papal temporal kingdom, simply and naturally, by being made a proper part, as it has since become the restored and appropriated

capital of united Italy, destined, we are assured, to be henceforth the abode of that free and enlightened Gospel Christianity, which has been for so many ages excluded and banished from it, but which has now re-entered and begun energetically so to fight and so to work as eventually to make it, by the grace of Christ, truly Christian and prosperous. So shall it be with all antichristian and all pagan capitals and kingdoms: as such they are all doomed to perish utterly. We can well rejoice with great joy in the anticipation of this, when we thus interpret this precious Book, and know that they shall so perish only by becoming the holy and happy abodes of truly Christian people, the real and the perpetual property of Jesus Christ.

III.

CHAPTER XX.

*RESURRECTION OF THE MARTYRS, OR RESTORATION
AND EXTENSION OF THE TRUE OR MARTYR-
CHURCH. THE MILLENNIAL REIGN OF CHRIST AND
HIS PEOPLE ON EARTH, AND THE UNIVERSAL
JUDGMENT.*

1. *Vers.* 1-3. "And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and cast him into the abyss, and shut (it), and sealed (it) over him, that he should deceive the nations no more until the thousand years should be finished; after this he must be loosed for a little time."

(1) Before treating of this chapter in detail, it may be well to observe its important relation to the whole, and especially to the latter half, of this Book, which we have been all along regarding as, to a very great extent, a most wonderful epitome of the whole Bible, together with certain additional prophecies of its own. We need not say, that it is written from beginning to end almost entirely in the language of symbol, of hieroglyph, of picture. Every symbol, every hieroglyph, every picture, is no mere word or sentence, but a whole parable, it may be, a very long and precious story. In this way, this Book may be called, *The Longest History in the Fewest Words*; containing not only, as we usually say, *multum in parvo*, but *maximum in minimo*. Perhaps we are wrong. The whole history of the world may be said to have been

condensed, as no mere or uninspired man could have possibly condensed it, into one sentence, of which this Book is simply an enlarged and detailed edition,—“I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her Seed: He shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel.” Especially is the latter half of this Book a most brief and yet most comprehensive, because symbolic, consecutive historical enlargement of that one prophetic-historical seed, which was not evolved, but directly created, like the first seed of life, and of which all prophecy and all history may be called the Divine and human evolution. The twelfth chapter carries us back to this first great promise. It does so by setting vividly before our minds the great red dragon or old serpent, the serpent of Eden, and the birth of the promised Seed, in whom, as Head and all in all, is summed up the whole promised seed of the woman, or entire collective body of the regenerated descendants of regenerated Eve, from the beginning to the end of time. As the vision of the sun-clothed woman and the dragon thus reminds us of the long period between the spiritual death of the first Adam and the resurrection-birth of the Second, it also forms the first of the entire series representative of the whole history of redemption, from that glorious birth to the final judgment and eternal consummation of all things; that history being in reality a history of the great conflict between Christ and Satan, ending only with the end of time and the glorious and eternal triumph of good over evil, of God in Christ and the redeemed over Satan in himself and all who died in impenitence and sin.

In the same vision, the dragon is represented as the head and all-animating power of the heathen world, and more definitely of those successive pagan empires which stood in some direct, and more or less antagonistic, relation to the people of Jehovah, the God of salvation, or to the Israel of God, typical and spiritual. The same vision sets forth the great war which followed the ascension of Christ, that between Michael and the dragon, that between Christ and Satan, between Christianity and Paganism, between, in fact, the young and seemingly feeble Christian Church and the mighty empire of Pagan Rome. The dragon, the head of the pagan world, was overcome and cast down; that is to say, as we have interpreted, Roman Paganism received from rising and resistless Christianity that deadly wound from which it never did, or could in its native form, recover. The Galilean had conquered. Satan, thus fallen, seeks to rise again. As he had seduced the

newly created children of God, he now proposed to seduce His redeemed children. The deadly wound he mysteriously cures. He wonderfully succeeds in paganising the Christian Church. He enters the very camp of Christ, and there raises an army which shall long prove the most deadly foe of Christ and the kingdom of saints. The great predicted apostasy has its origin and development in his subtle, delusive agency. The beast, with the wounded head restored, is to be traced to the same mysterious agency, and so said to come out of the abyss. The throne of Christ is usurped by Antichrist. Mystic Babylon takes the place of the spiritual Jerusalem. The antichristian nations or Gentiles take the place of the converted peoples or true Israel of God. Nominal Christians fight and prevail against true Christians. The terrible reign of antichristian persecution follows, and, for long and weary centuries, wastes, crushes, destroys, the Church of Christ. The witnesses of Christ, reduced to the lowest legal number of only two, are slain within the great antichristian capital. The darkest night has come. The witnesses rise from the dead and ascend to heaven. A new day has dawned, the day of the judgment of Antichrist, which too many have mistaken for the judgment of the world. A great earthquake shakes the antichristian kingdom, and no less than a tenth of the antichristian capital, Babylon the Great, falls. Such is the first most terrible blow, the blow of the Glorious Reformation, which fell upon the empire of the beast.

The Lamb is now again seen on Mount Zion, and with Him His faithful army of the sealed and symbolic 144,000. The war advances. The tide of victory follows the royal Captain, who seemed to have been overcome and banished from His kingdom. The Church of the martyrs, Pagan and Papal, long captive in mystical Babylon, and organically as truly dead and buried as was ancient Israel in literal Babylon in the time of like captivity, again appears. Vision after vision sets forth the manner and the progress and the result of the Christian and antichristian war; and how the house of Christ waxes stronger and stronger, and the house of Antichrist waxes weaker and weaker. That prolonged war we have found symbolically represented by one most terrible and decisive battle, issuing in the capture and doom of the leader, the destruction of his armies, the desolation of his capital, and the final and total extinction of his kingdom. From the most important time to which we have referred, when what we have regarded as the first blow was struck, the Lamb has been, as the Rider on the white horse, adding diadem to diadem, increasing the number of His

followers, preparing His bride for her marriage, rebuilding the walls of the fallen Jerusalem, reducing the territory of Satan, and so binding or confining him, and incapacitating him for carrying on his long successful work of deceiving the nations. All this we have found duly and wonderfully symbolised. And now, in these three closing chapters, we have in like manner duly and wonderfully symbolised the restored and enlarged kingdom of Jesus Christ, His glorious and universal millennial reign on earth, to be followed by the final and universal judgment of mankind, and then by His still more glorious, blessed, and eternal reign in heaven.

(2) "*And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand.*" In treating of this vision we must carefully remember what we have again and again remarked, that what may seem to be the work of a very short time, or even of a moment, may have taken ages of Divine operation to effect. These visions present so many aspects of the Divine kingdom, of the great spiritual warfare, and of the progress of the redemptive work, that we must carefully mark the relation of each successive vision to all the preceding visions, and how far the special form of each may have been determined by that relation. Here we can be at no loss to perceive that this most important one has at once a close connection with those which immediately precede, and which set forth the total and final destruction, and consequent removal, of the antichristian kingdom out of the way of all Christian progress, and also a more general connection with the whole Book. The idea first and naturally suggested is that the descent of this angel immediately follows the destruction just alluded to, and that the work assigned him is at once direct and of the very shortest time. No indirect or human or long-continued agency is suggested. Satan is simply and by mighty angelic power so banished from this world that he has no personal presence or influence on earth during the period mentioned. This binding is thus viewed, and viewed by very many, as a glorious fact, not to be actively sought, but to be patiently waited for, belonging entirely to the future; though others take a totally different view of the whole vision, and regard this great work as accomplished in the distant past—according to some through the life and especially the death of Jesus Christ. Most certainly, apart from all symbol, we may safely say that Christ, and Christ alone, does or can so bind Satan as to make him unable to deceive any individual men, saints or sinners, not to speak, as here, of the nations of the earth. Accordingly, and as Christ alone can be supposed to have the key

of the abyss, it has been inferred that this angel can be no other than Christ Himself. In this, however, they may be so far at least mistaken.

Like Michael of the twelfth chapter, this angel may be simply and highly representative of the agency of Christ. We take this to be the proper view. This angel may be as suitably represented as using this key as is the fallen star of the vision of the fifth trumpet. That an angel did or shall literally come down from heaven, literally to use his greater power to bind Satan, and literally to imprison him in the abyss, we believe to be as far from the truth as it could well be, and can be supposed only by such as are most fearfully guilty of violating the very first law of symbolical interpretation, the law of clearly distinguishing the symbol from the thing symbolised, by failing to do which the most monstrous conceptions and wild imaginations have been formed and given forth to the world of the future of the kingdom of Christ and His redemptive work on earth. As said, Christ and Christ alone can so bind Satan and all his angelic hosts as to put a stop to their deceptive work. In passing, we may say that these hosts seem to be forgotten by not a few in their literal interpretation of this vision. Christ and Christ alone can provide the true chain by which Satan is here said to be bound. That chain cannot possibly be of any material substance, of iron or adamant. The angel brings it down from heaven. It is of heavenly origin, of heavenly construction.

We would not deny the possibility of a spiritual agent being put so under Divine or even angelic power as to be literally prevented from moving from place to place in the great universe. By whatever means this might be effected, we at once acknowledge that he might, without any real impropriety, be said to be bound with a chain, or simply to be enchained. The fallen angels, Satan and his angels, those here referred to as bound by this angel and imprisoned in the abyss, so that they can walk this earth of ours no more for a thousand years, are elsewhere said to be even now "kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." These "bonds" or "chains" do not prevent the freest and the most deceptive agency among men. Why, then, should the words before us imply literal binding or local confinement at all? The same dragon, according to this Book, and at the mystic birth of Christ, is represented as in heaven, as fighting with Michael the archangel, as "cast down to the earth and his angels with him," "neither was their place found any more in heaven." Such was the work of one angel. Here the same dragon and these angels, being on earth and

deceiving the nations, are to be bound by the same or some other angel, and cast out of the earth and into the abyss, "their place being found no more" on earth, for at least "a thousand years." Now, what was really meant by the war of Michael and the dragon? Was the dragon literally in heaven? Was the war literally in heaven? Was the dragon not literally on earth at the birth of Christ, and both before and during this war in heaven? Was he literally cast down from heaven to the earth? Did he then begin his work of deceiving the nations? Is not the whole vision symbolic? Does not the whole simply represent the real war between Christianity and the Paganism of the Roman empire, as is clearly implied in the triumphal song which follows—"Now is come the salvation . . . for the accuser of our brethren is cast down. . . . And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life even unto death."

If Satan is thus represented as cast out of heaven, when faithful Christians on earth converted the Roman heathen, why should not this binding and casting of Satan out of the earth and into the abyss represent, in like manner, a new triumph over him and his angels, through the very same means and over the very same foe in simply another form, the triumph of the restored Church over the paganised or Papal Church, the triumph of apostolic Christianity raised, like the apostolic witnesses, from the dead, over essentially the same Roman Paganism raised from the dead, like the head wounded to death and restored to life in the new and antichristian form of Papal Rome? To all intents, Michael bound the dragon with a great chain, and so cast him down to the earth; just as this angel did or shall do, and so cast him into the abyss. If Satan was literally on earth when symbolically fighting with Michael in heaven, why should he not continue literally on earth when symbolically cast into the abyss? The warfare with the dragon viewed as the god of the pagan world would be virtually the same as that with him viewed as the god of the papal earth. The means by which he was overcome and cast down in the first instance would be the same as those by which he was overcome and cast down in the second. In the former case, original apostolic Christianity was the means: in the latter, restored apostolic Christianity. The real chain was thus pure gospel or Christian truth. The real chain, with which spirits of darkness can be most effectually prevented from deceiving mankind, is a chain of Divine and saving light. As Christ is the Light of the world, so Satan may be called the darkness

of the world. As the light enters and spreads, the darkness is dispersed and passes away. Only the children of darkness or of the night can be deluded and deceived. The children of the day and of light, and just in proportion as they are of the light, cannot be deceived. Wherever Christ by the Holy Spirit enlightens a man, or by means of the gospel translates a man from the kingdom of darkness into that of His own marvellous light, Satan is so bound that he cannot, as before, deceive. Satan is seen to be the arch-deceiver.

In Romans xvi. 19, 20, we find an illustration: "I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple unto that which is evil. And the God of peace will bruise Satan under your feet shortly." How? By enabling them to trample him under their feet? As Paul suggests, by making them wise unto that which is good and simple unto that which is evil; or (1 John v. 18), by keeping one's self, that "*the evil one toucheth him not.*" So here, God binds Satan, prevents him from deceiving the world, by so enlightening men as to Himself, that they are beyond the reach of his deceptive power. In this way, we may regard the descent and work of this angel as beginning, either when Christ came down from heaven and began His great enlightening work, or when Christ resumed the same great work, after Satan had, by perversion of the Christian Church, re-introduced the darkness of Paganism, and when He restored His faithful witnesses to life and power. During the period of the Church's perversion Satan may be said to have been "loosed out of his prison" for a very long period, as we are told he "shall be," "for a little season" after "the thousand years are finished." This second binding with the "great chain" of the "light of the gospel of the glory of Christ," or of "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," may be said to begin with what we have called the first blow dealt to the Papal kingdom, when the witnesses were restored to new life and the tenth of the great Babylon fell.

From that date till now the binding process has been going on. The angel from heaven has been putting on the mighty chain. That this should take so many centuries may seem incredible. Be our view correct or not, as a plain matter of fact that very process has all that while been thus going on. Satan cannot so deceive multitudes, even peoples, once under his morally and spiritually deceptive power. Millions and millions have been delivered from the deceptive influence of the false prophet whom he has for more than a thousand years used as his most powerful minister. We

repeat, this binding process is no doubtful matter of prophecy : it is a plain and certain matter of fact. Nor should we wonder to find so vast and protracted a work here represented as if the short and decisive work of an angel of mighty power. Jesus speaks of seeing "Satan fall (or fallen) as lightning from heaven." Yet his fall was not that of a moment, though to the Divine foreglance of Jesus, passing from end to end of the fall, it looked as if it were the descent of lightning or the swift fall of a brilliant meteor to the earth. We have again and again pointed to the fact that, in this Book as also in that of Daniel, the work of centuries is sometimes represented as that of an instant—as in the case of the empires, which literally took centuries to rise to their full height, and yet which are symbolically set forth as rising in so short a time as wild beasts may be supposed to require to rise out of a stormy sea. The time here required cannot be known from the words or from the vision considered by itself. This must be judged by the nature of the work symbolised, or determined by the disclosures of other visions of the Book.

We might have here adduced the mighty utterance of Christ Himself as strikingly illustrative of this whole matter : John xii. 31-2, "Now is the judgment of this world : now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself." In the *first* place, we have a great crisis of the world's history called a judgment, and that apart from any of the forms or external appearance of judgment. The cross of Christ at once practically condemned the world and the prince of the world, and formed the foundation of the justification of all who believed. In the *second* instance, we are here expressly told how Satan is to be *cast out* of the world, to all intents to be, as here, "cast into the abyss,"—"and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself," all classes of men, and in the end all mankind,—"lifted up" on the cross ; seeing it is added, "This He said, signifying by what manner of death He should die." Men, through the Gospel, must be made to see Him thus lifted up ; and then, as through the force of this new and mighty attraction men are drawn to Him, they shall be drawn from the prince of this world. Just as the work of attraction goes on, the sphere of that prince's delusive influence will contract. He will be cast out of part after part of his wide dominion. As thus Christ's kingdom enlarges, that of Satan will diminish. As Christ goes on to enlighten and to save, Satan will lose his power to deceive and to destroy. From the beginning this great work wonderfully advanced, till it received the

terrible and most mysterious check from the hostile antichristian power. Resumed at the opening of the Reformation, that work has been going on to the present day. We need not say how far it yet is from completion. Still, more widely, more perceptibly than ever, may all, who have eyes to see, behold the great Antagonist of Satan carrying on His enlightening, emancipating work. The "*two*," or *few*, have become *many* "witnesses." The slain, but risen, martyrs have grown into a vast multitude of kingly priests to God. In the *third* place, Christ's words, like those of this vision, would naturally suggest the idea of a work to be completed in a short period of time. The cross has simply to be endured, and then the work of attraction is to be accomplished. With the exception of the fearful check just alluded to, it has been advancing slowly and surely up to the present time. We may safely say that at least the dawn of the Millennial day has much more than begun.

(3) "*And he laid hold of the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and cast him into the abyss, and shut (it) and sealed (it) over him.*" We have really treated of these words already. It will be seen that we have precisely the same description of the dragon here as in the twelfth chapter, where it is said, "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." As we have already said, he was cast out, symbolically by Michael and his angels, and literally by Christ and His faithful followers. Here he was cast out, symbolically by the same or some other angel, after being bound with a great chain, and literally, though not so expressly said, also by Christ and His faithful armies clothed in that "fine linen which is the righteousness of saints." The great battle of the preceding chapter, between the royal Commander and these armies on the one hand, and the beast and his armies on the other, was really the battle of that Commander and the dragon, whose representative was the beast, or whose power and authority had been given to the beast, for the very purpose of carrying on his great work of deceiving the nations or of frustrating the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. The triumph of the Rider on the white horse over the beast was thus in reality the triumph of that Rider over the dragon. The battle in question, then—a great and prolonged warfare, as we have regarded it—was part of the binding of the dragon and preventing him from going on to deceive mankind. We say "part," because, even after the final overthrow of the beast, very much would remain to be done to prevent him

from still carrying on his deceptive work. The removal of the main obstruction to the conversion of the world would still leave an immense work to be accomplished before that conversion could be said to be fully effected, or before mankind could be so enlightened and sanctified as to be beyond the delusive influence of the evil one.

(4) "*That he should deceive the nations no more until the thousand years should be finished.*" These words ought to have prevented all mistake. They are really explanatory of the symbolic act of the angel from heaven. John could not have inferred the design from the deed. The real design, however, may clearly indicate the meaning of the symbolic deed. Satan was so bound as to prevent further deception. The nations are to be deceived no more for this symbolic period. How far the words are to be taken absolutely or relatively, we cannot know from themselves. The song of triumph over Pagan Rome would suggest complete and final victory, and that most truly so far as the imperial pagan empire was concerned; and yet the full conversion of individuals to Christ was very far from being effected. Whether, during the millennial period, all men without exception shall be thus converted, it would be at least unsafe to infer from the words. Certainly all ruling power shall be in Christian hands, and all the laws and customs of nations shall be in harmony with that true righteousness by which alone they can be exalted and blessed of God. The universal government of the world will be in the hands of Christ and His people. For a thousand years, be that period what it may, He and they shall alone reign on earth. As yet we are not informed as to the entire or exact extent of the good enjoyed by all individual men. We find that, at the close of the mystic period, a countless host of human beings shall rise up to assail the camp and the city, the kingdom of Christ and Christians. How long that period really is, or how far we have the means by which we can with any safety determine its length, we shall leave for after consideration.

(5) "*After this he must be loosed for a little time.*" The real force of this pre-intimation will become clearer after the character of the millennial age has been considered. Only it may be observed that the fact here stated has a most important bearing on the interpretation of this whole chapter, and of various passages of this Book and in other parts of Scripture. It presents a most remarkable object to our minds. It leads us to distinguish most clearly between the millennial and the eternal, the terrestrial and the celestial, kingdom and glory of Jesus Christ. Just as a great and finally organised apostasy intervenes between the primitive

triumph of Christ and His saints over the Roman earth and their millennial triumph over the whole world, with the long reign of righteousness and peace which followed, so a like great and most daringly organised apostasy is said to intervene between the glorious and uninterrupted or undisturbed millennial reign of Christ on earth and His vastly more glorious and absolutely peaceful and perfect eternal reign in heaven. Through this final and terrible outbreak of the forces of evil, the awful character of sin will be most impressively revealed; the necessity, vastness and grandeur of the redemptive work of Christ made more fully known to angels as well as men than ever; and the grand distinction between the initial salvation of time and of earth, and the perfected salvation of eternity and of heaven, will be made to appear so far beyond all possible anticipation as never, through the lapse of ages, to be forgotten.

2. *Vers. 4-6.* "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and (I saw) the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished. This is The First Resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: over these the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years."

(1) "*And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them.*" Here we are reminded of previous allusions to this great judicial crisis, especially that of chap. xi. 18, "And the nations were wroth, and Thy wrath came, and the time of the dead to be judged, and (the time) to give (or, even to give) their reward to thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to them that fear thy name, the small and the great; and to destroy them that destroy the earth." As this is the same time of judgment as that before us, it may be well to observe, that these words form the real key to the right interpretation of this marvellous and, we may say, most glorious vision. To a very great extent it is simply a clearer and more complete form of that of Daniel. The two visions cast not a little light on one another. In treating of the seventh, usually called the third woe-trumpet, we have been led to identify the time spoken of, when Jehovah, the Almighty, is said to have "taken His great power" and to have reigned, with the time just preceding that of the resurrection of the two witnesses, the grand

crisis in the history of the Church, when the kingdom of Antichrist had come to its zenith, and, we may say, when the oppressed kingdom of Christ reached its very nadir. This point of time is most clearly and unmistakably set before our minds in the prophecy of Daniel above referred to.

In Dan. vii. 8, 9, we are told, *First*, of that "little horn," having "a mouth speaking great things," and which is to be identified with the beast or Antichrist, whose destruction we have been already considering; and, *Secondly*, of the judgment which followed, when "the thrones were placed, and One that was Ancient of days did sit." As we are further told, vers. 13, 14, of One like unto a son of man "coming even to the Ancient of Days," and receiving a universal and everlasting kingdom, this may account for more than one throne being alluded to. Again, in vers. 21, 22, it is said, "I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them," slaying the two witnesses, and thus really crushing the witnessing people of Christ,—“until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to (or, for) the saints of the Most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.” The meaning of this is very simple. Judgment, in the sense of full vindication, was so given in favour of the saints, against whom the "little horn" was just said to have prevailed, that they, in good time, came to possess the kingdom, their rightful kingdom, that of which the antichristian horn or power had unjustly robbed them. But we are told of a very different judgment, one of terrible condemnation, against this persecuting power, "into whose hand the saints had been" most mysteriously given "until a time, and times, and half a time," three years and a half, or forty-two months, the very period of the reign of the beast;—ver. 26, "But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end." Then, and not till then, shall at least the full time come, above referred to, "that the saints possessed the kingdom," or, as is sublimely added, ver. 27, "And the kingdom and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High: His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him." We are thus brought to the very point at which we have arrived in this wonderful vision of John, the Daniel of the New Testament. Let us sum up, then, what we have thus found.

First. The time when the Ancient of days, or the Lord God, the Almighty, took His place on one of the thrones of judgment, to

judge between the kingdom of the saints and that of the "little horn" of Daniel, or of the "beast" of John, is to be identified with the time when (Rev. xi. 15-17) it was said by "great voices in heaven, The kingdom of the world is become (the kingdom) of the Lord and of His Christ," and when "the four and twenty elders . . . worshipped God, saying, We give Thee thanks . . . because Thou hast taken Thy great power, and didst reign." This time is thus said to be past, and must have at least begun before the first blow was dealt to the kingdom of the beast, or just before the resurrection of the witnesses and fall of the tenth part of the city, Babylon. In fact, the taking of His power, or what we may call the special or renewed beginning to reign, is simply the sitting of the Ancient of days on one of the thrones set down for the great judgment spoken of. What is said of the kingdom becoming that "of our Lord, and of His Christ," would seem to confirm the view we have given of the plurality of thrones,—as if one was for "the Ancient of days," and the other for the "One like unto a son of man who came to Him," or in the words just quoted, one for "our Lord," and the other for "His Christ."

Secondly. As we have seen, the judgment alluded to by both Daniel and John was twofold,—one of condemnation, and one of vindication,—the former of the little horn, or beast, or Antichrist, and the latter of the persecuted and wasted saints of God, or martyr-Church of Jesus Christ. The judgment against Antichrist and his followers must be fully executed before the judgment for Christ and His people can be fully enjoyed. The execution of the former, we have seen, involved no short time, nay, a long period of war, disaster after disaster in long succession. So the enjoyment of the latter may, or in this case must, imply a like long-continued contest, with victory after victory, perhaps not without many a reverse, till, human instrumentality being employed, "they shall take away his dominion," that of Antichrist, "to consume and to destroy it unto the end." These two judgments are expressly alluded to in Rev. xi. 18: "And the nations were wroth, and Thy wrath came, and the time of the dead to be judged, even to give their reward to Thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to them that fear Thy name, the small and the great,"—even to those vindicated,— "and to destroy them that destroy the earth,"—even those condemned.

Thirdly. This second sentence, we have seen, must be first executed; and now, in the course of our exposition, we have been already led to consider and to treat of its entire execution. With the exception of those chapters descriptive of Antichrist and his

kingdom, all from the eleventh up to the end of the nineteenth have been occupied mainly with the great war against that kingdom, and with the fearful "last plagues" intended for its destruction. Only by keeping this in view, and thus by seeing that we have now come to treat of the first sentence, or the judgment of reward to the martyr-Church, the prophets and saints, etc., who had so long and so much suffered, can we see the real character of this wonderful vision of John, about the meaning of which so much controversy has obtained even from earliest times. We have written the above with the greater fulness, that we may be the better able to find out the real meaning of this fourth verse, "And I saw thrones," etc.

Fourthly. For the sake of emphasis, we may again repeat, that this great judgment relates to the two grand classes alone spoken of, the truly Christian and persecuted, and the really antichristian and persecuting Churches, and by no means at all to mankind at large. To identify this with the final judgment of the righteous and wicked is thoroughly to err as to both. The latter will follow the glorious Millennium. The former began, as we have found, before the rise of the two witnesses or almost extinguished witnessing Church of Christ from the death of enforced silence or the silence of threatened death. This judgment has thus been actually in session for centuries, ever since the opening of the glorious Reformation. The work of destroying the antichristian kingdom, or "them that destroy the earth," has been visibly and certainly going on. We are in the very midst of it. We have already pointed out to what a vast extent Papal, persecuting Rome has fallen—even to such an extent that she has almost lost the power to persecute, and now seeks to persuade the nations that, in being deprived of the temporal power, she has become alone and most terribly persecuted. The Divine judgment, thus begun and long carried on, must continue till the whole work of destruction is completed, as it is powerfully described at the close of the nineteenth chapter, and till the sublime vision with which the twentieth opens has been fully realised, or till the martyr-Church has risen to more than all former life and glory, and Satan has ceased to deceive, not only the nations once under antichristian delusion, but also the nations of the whole world,—in a word, till the first resurrection has been fully realised and the millennial reign of Christ and Christians has truly begun. We may now be the better able to proceed:—

(1) "*And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them.*"

a. The first question here is, What are the "thrones" thus

seen? Naturally they would seem to be those spoken of in Daniel vii. 9, "I beheld till thrones were placed, and the Ancient of days did sit." If, as suggested, one of these thrones was placed for "One like a son of man," or for King Jesus, then they cannot be those here referred to, as the words which follow could not have been used. Even in the sense of authority to judge or to act as judges, with no possible propriety could "judgment be said to have been *given*" to those sitting upon them. The only supposition, which we can conceive applicable, would rather be, that the plurality of the thrones was due to the presence of so many inferior or assessorial judges, in this case angelic, acting along with the great Judge, and of whom, though not of Him, it might with propriety be said, that "judgment *was given* to them," or that they were entrusted with a judicial office. On this supposition, the reference would be to the Divine judgment, viewed as having already condemned the antichristian, and as now vindicating the Christian kingdom. In this case, the words which follow as to the souls of the martyrs, and as to the first resurrection, must be regarded as descriptive of the result of the triumphant verdict as to the true character of "the dead prophets and saints," whose "time to be judged and rewarded," we are told, chap. xi. 18, had now come. The victorious judgment is pronounced; and the souls of those slain by both Pagan and Papal Rome, "the souls under the altar" of the fifth seal, and those of the second class of saints for whose death these are told to wait, appear to the unveiled eye of John. Further, in this case, the only persons here regarded as judged would be these two well-defined classes of martyrs. They alone live anew. They alone experience the first resurrection. They alone reign with Christ during the mystic Millennium. Over them alone is it here said "the second death has no power." Once more, in this case these martyrs must be taken, not literally and personally, but mystically or symbolically of the martyr-Church, or whole Church of Christ viewed as persecuted and all but destroyed. For then, and then only, could all Christians be said to be sharers in that resurrection which involves eternal salvation, or which places the subjects of it beyond the power of the second death. We do not take this view of these thrones; but would thus point out the fact, that it at least implies the symbolic character of the death and resurrection of the martyrs.

b. However, instead of angels, it has been maintained, and with great force, by Vitranga and many others, that these thrones are to be viewed as occupied by the saints of God, who are to

be distinguished from the "souls of the martyrs," or simply the martyrs raised symbolically from the dead. These saints have judgment given to them in the sense of judicial authority; but as the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, that authority is simply within the bounds of that Church or kingdom. They are therefore the presbyters and other office-bearers of the New Testament Church. We may say that others, holding the same view so far as judicial dignity is concerned, and overlooking the spiritual nature of the kingdom referred to, suppose the literally risen saints to act as the judges of the rest of mankind. Let us keep by the view of Vitrunga, that the enthroned saints are the rulers or presbyters of the Christian Church. Then, they can form but a small portion of the entire body of the saints or people of Christ. In this way, we must divide those spoken of into three, and not merely into two classes,—the presbyters or rulers of the saints, the grand body of the saints, and the martyrs or more distinguished of the saints. However, neither here nor in the parallel prophecy of Daniel have we the slightest authority for such a threefold division.

In Daniel the kingdom is simply given to the saints of God, yet regarded as delivered from their antichristian oppressors. There is no note of even a twofold division. Nay, the judgment is expressly said to be given to this same undivided community—"the saints of the Most High." Further, in the words to which we have so often referred, Rev. xi. 18, though three classes are mentioned, namely, "prophets and saints and those who fear God," all are put under one order—even "the dead," whose "time to be judged" and rewarded is said to have come, and who are assuredly to be identified with the faithful and persecuted martyrs of former times. Again, in this wondrous vision of John, all those who are said to live and reign with Christ a thousand years are just these very dead, and these alone; since only as dead and raised from the dead could they be said, whether literally or symbolically, to have part in "the first resurrection." But, when we look more closely at the words, we find that, of the souls of the two classes of martyrs, the martyrs of Rome Pagan and of Rome Papal, it is alone said, "they lived and reigned with Christ; . . . this is the first resurrection." No such word is used of those said to sit upon the thrones, and to whom judgment is said to have been given, unless on the supposition that they are to be identified with these very souls of the martyrs. Who these enthroned and highly exalted ones are, we are not told. If judges, of the nature

of their office and of the people over whom they exercise it, we have not a word or hint. Vitranga, the prince of apocalyptic interpreters, can give us nothing but conjecture—a conjecture, too, which we have found to imply such a threefold division of the persons referred to as only tends to involve the whole in increased perplexity.

The real error of Vitranga and of very many others, we are persuaded, lies in their totally mistaken view of the "judgment" said to be given to those seen to sit on these mystic thrones. We have again and again pointed to the real nature of that "judgment" as no judicial office or dignity at all, but simply as a Divine and glorious vindication of the martyred Church of many generations, answering to the very cry of the slaughtered ones from under the altar of the fifth seal: "They cried with a great voice, saying, How long, O Master, O sovereign Lord, the holy and true, dost Thou not judge,"—yes, dost Thou not *judge*,—"and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth." They cried for *judgment*. They are not denied it. They are simply told to wait till a like class of witnesses "should be killed even as they were," and then the time would come for the judgment of both classes thus dead, the two very classes whose souls are here referred to. When we turn to Daniel, we find this fully confirmed: chap. vii. 22, "Until the Ancient of days came,"—He said to sit as a Judge in ver. 9,—"*and judgment was given to (or for) the saints of the Most High*"; so that, as a consequence of His judgment or victorious verdict, "the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom." The thrones, accordingly, which John saw were occupied by these very saints, to whom judgment was thus given, a judgment constituting them royal priests or priestly kings, of whose rank these thrones are simply the emblems or symbols.

c. Let us, then, turn to this view of the subject, and ask, How can these enthroned ones be said to represent the whole community of the saints? Further, how can "the souls," also seen, be said, as we think we have proved, to represent the very same community? If both so do, then they must be themselves one and the same class, merely differently described, and in reality a part used representatively and symbolically for the whole. The modes of expression are very peculiar, and decidedly Hebraistic; making an exact grammatical rendering not a little obscure and perplexing. What we deem the real meaning, that which alone consists with the entire context, it might perhaps have been impossible to express more clearly in so few and so suitable words. Let it be observed

that, for the purpose of identification and yet of contrast, "the souls under the altar" had to be now seen as raised to royal estate, to be seen, in fact, in the persons of those sitting on these thrones, or as if sitting themselves upon them. By giving this double description, John is led at once to show who really were raised to these thrones, without having directly to represent "souls" as so sitting. By first and obscurely telling us of persons so sitting, and then indicating that in these persons he saw or recognised "the souls of them that had been beheaded," etc., made "to live and reign with Christ," the whole meaning is finely and without shadow of impropriety expressed. At the same time, the words relating to the thrones serve clearly to connect this vision with that of Daniel, in which the saints are said to be judged and made to possess the kingdom. If we may venture to give a free and somewhat paraphrastic rendering, according to the sense rather than the exact grammatical form, we would put the whole thus: "I saw thrones, and the saints, long condemned, now justified and exalted, sitting upon them, and in them I saw the souls of the martyrs raised to new life and made to reign with Him for whom they had suffered and died."

To this, we have said, we acknowledge one strong, yet by no means so decisive an objection as Vitranga has regarded it. Our view, of course, makes the second part of the description to all intents explanatory of the first; so that we should expect to find the word rendered "souls" in the same case, the dative, as the word rendered "unto them," "unto them, even the souls," whereas it is in a different case, the accusative, *ψυχὰς*, and not *ψυχὰς* to agree with *αὐτοῖς*. However, we seem to have merely a construction according to the intended sense. What we have given above seems sufficiently exact. However, we might render more closely and quite grammatically thus: "I saw thrones, etc. . . (I saw) even the souls," etc. At any rate, when we find the whole context confirming, we might say demonstrating, the correctness of the view taken, we should greatly err if we were to allow what could be regarded as no more than a seeming grammatical irregularity, such as often occurs in this Book, to compel us to reject it.

(2) "*And (I saw) the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand.*" We have very fully treated of these words already. As said, the two classes of sufferers under Pagan and Papal Rome are intended. This is indicated by the modes of expression here used. The former is

proved to refer to the persecution of Pagan Rome by the verb translated "beheaded," and which means, to strike with the axe, suggesting the Roman manner of execution; and further, by the fact that the martyrs of the fifth seal suffered through pagan persecution. That the latter class suffered under Papal Rome is clearly indicated by the express description. No third class is here referred to. Much has been written about the expression, "the souls of them," as thus employed, whilst a resurrection of persons is implied. It has been argued that the word "souls" is often used of persons, as "eight souls" for "eight persons" who were in the ark. We hardly think a single case of, not "souls," but "souls of persons," being used for persons, could be produced. Elliott has defended his position more successfully by pointing to the words of this chapter, "I saw the dead . . . standing before the throne," where not those still dead, but those who had been dead but were now alive, were intended. So, it is said, "I saw the souls of them that had been beheaded," for "I saw those whose souls," etc. However, we hold that "the souls" spoken of are here expressly said to have been seen raised from under the altar, endowed with new life, and made to occupy these thrones of royal rank and dignity. The contrast was fully intended. The whole is symbolical. It was proper that the symbol of the fifth seal should be thus here introduced. If the death of these witnesses was symbolically represented in the one case, it was but consistent that the resurrection of the same witnesses should be symbolically represented in the other. We need not say, that the grand question long and keenly debated here is, whether we are to regard the death as literal and personal, or as representative and symbolical. Did "the souls" of the martyrs "under the altar" symbolise the death of these martyrs alone, or the persecution and designed suppression or annihilation of the whole martyr-Church itself? Perhaps still better, are we to regard these martyrs of the fifth seal as set forth solely as individual or personal victims, and not as representative of the persecuted Church? If so, then our pre-millennial friends are perfectly logical at least in maintaining that, in the vision before us, they ought to be regarded as personally raised from the dead. But, in this case, they must accept the equally perfectly logical consequence, that these martyrs alone can be regarded as raised literally from the dead. The martyrs of Rome Pagan and Papal *car*, in this case, alone have "part in the first resurrection." As we hold that these witnesses were representative of the whole witnessing Church, we can also and most joyfully hold

that their resurrection represented or symbolised the restoration of that whole Church to new and more glorious life, or the participation of the whole of that same Church in all the blessings of what is immediately afterwards called "the first resurrection." However, this question will come up again.

(3) "*And they lived, and reigned with Christ a thousand years.*" As we have said, John had seen these souls as dead; and he now sees them made alive, and, in token of Divine approbation and glorification, enthroned as kings or priests to God. At the same time, and so far as real status is concerned, we should carefully observe that they are not said to be raised above the common level of all genuine Christians, or of all Christians from the very beginning of the gospel. They are simply declared to be raised to the very same rank as that claimed by all those represented in the first chapter of this Book as giving thanks to Christ for raising them to it,—“Unto Him that loveth us . . . and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father,” just as here, “They shall be priests of God and of Christ.” If here it is added, “and shall reign with Him a thousand years,” even this is no more than is said of all Christians in chap. v. 9, 10,—“Thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with Thy blood of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and madest them unto our God a kingdom and priests (or kings and priests); and they reign upon the earth.” Though we may hope that the Christians of millennial ages shall rise in spirit and character above the great majority of those of earlier times, they are still simply of the same rank,—the sons of God, the redeemed of Christ, a royal priesthood, or “a kingdom, priests of God and of Christ.” The Christian Church had long been denied this exalted rank, had long been crushed and all but annihilated by a proud and false or antichristian Church; and now “the judgment was set,” and the latter condemned as the deadly foe of the true; whilst the former or the true was simply treated as the true and restored to its proper place, or openly acknowledged to be the kingdom of which Christ is the sole Head.

Nothing higher is affirmed of these risen and enthroned ones than Paul grandly says of all Gentile converts to Christ: Eph. ii. 19, 20, “Ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief Corner-stone.” In what do these inspired words, relating to the saints of the first century, come short of those, relating to the citizens and city of the New Jerusalem of all millen-

nial times, chap. xxi. 14, "And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb"? In thus living and reigning with Christ, we repeat, these saints, whether raised from the dead literally or symbolically, were simply restored to the true rank of all Christians of all ages, of which rank, not only the cruel treatment, but even the very existence of the antichristian Church, was an express and most daring denial. Is not this just another way of setting forth the real position of the Church of Rome, thoroughly antichristian on the one hand, and yet pretending to be alone the one true Church of Christ, and treating all other Churches, however Scriptural and pure, as no Churches of Christ, and as worthy of all condemnation? Has not God been giving a contrary "judgment" from the opening of the Reformation? And is He not carrying out that judgment in our own times?

(4) "*The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished.*" The true force of these words, like that of every other clause, has been strongly contested. They must be interpreted as closely connected and even contrasted with those which precede. A portion of the dead, the martyrs, has just been said to have been made to live anew. With these exceptions, all the dead spoken of are declared to remain dead till the end of the thousand years. Let us carefully consider the import of this. If those, here said to live anew, are to be taken personally or literally, and not representatively and symbolically, then none else can be said to live, not even the very best of departed saints, far less the entire body of the people of God. A comparatively small class of Christians is thus raised above all others and crowned with special favour and glory, and that in opposition to the whole current of Scripture. Besides, no intelligent pre-millennialist could for a moment so limit the subjects of "the first resurrection," in which all saints, and no mere favoured few, must be held to have undoubted part. But in what way could the comparatively few represent the actually very many? We know of only one way. Let the slain witnesses represent the persecuted or martyr Church, and then the death and resurrection of the former will symbolise the death and resurrection of the latter. In this case, the entire Church of Christ is supposed to have been virtually destroyed or put to death, just as it is affirmed of the two witnesses; and then, as of them also, to have been revived or raised from the dead. Viewing that Church as one whole, one corporate body, we do not say ecclesiastically, but as united to Christ, the one true Head, we are to regard the

whole as persecuted and crushed and to all intents dead and buried. The antichristian Church rises, waxes stronger and stronger, makes war with the true, and overcomes it. The true disappears. The false takes and keeps its place, as if the only living and visible Church, and that for generations. The appointed period expires. What we may call the antichristian interregnum is brought to an end by the revival and reappearance of the true kingdom or Church of Jesus Christ. This revival and reappearance is called, and most significantly, by the name of a resurrection.

What we wish by all this to set forth is the fact that the same Church, which the souls under the altar represent as dead, is here represented, in the vision of the same souls, as restored to life, reconstituting the one and only true kingdom of Jesus Christ. Viewed as one whole from age to age, it is symbolised as having perished. Viewed as the same one whole from age to age, it is symbolised as raised from the dead or as the subject of a glorious resurrection. But if "the rest of the dead" includes all but the whole Church of Christ, then that expression would seem to include the whole unconverted world, viewed as having passed away before the opening of the Millennium, either by natural death or by genuine conversion to God. This would simply imply that the Christian Church has so increased as to embrace the whole world; so that, whilst the Church continued to live on for the mystic period in a long succession of Christian men, the world had, as a simple matter of consequence, ceased so to live as in a like long succession of godless and worldly people. However, as we have endeavoured to show, the dead, specially referred to as judged, consist of the two hostile kingdoms,—antichristian, already said to be slain by the sword of the great Captain, and therefore as now dead, and the Christian, now said to be raised from the dead,—the more direct and natural inference seems clearly to be, that by "the rest of the dead" is intended the whole kingdom of the beast or of Antichrist, of which we are expressly told of the complete destruction or universal death in the close of the previous chapter. The people of Christ will live on to the close of the Millennium. The slain followers of Antichrist shall have no successors, there shall arise no such class of men; none such shall live again till the thousand years are fulfilled.

Let it be remembered that the antichristian people, the beast and his kingdom, lived and reigned on earth for the long period of 1260 mystic days, certainly of at least 1260 years, whatever view we take of the year-day theory. Yet generation after generation passed away. The corporate whole lived on. So the Christian people

lived on as one whole, the one kingdom of Christ, up to the triumph of Antichrist, though, in like manner, generation after generation passed away; and so, doubtless, the same one people raised to new life shall live on and reign with Christ to the end of the glorious period here alluded to. The less objection to such a successive departure from this millennial Church is to be entertained, as all so departing are far from ceasing to be or to live, but simply cease to reign with Christ on earth that they may begin to reign with Him in higher glory and blessedness in heaven, and that for ever and ever. Bright as this vision is, the mystic period, however long and glorious, has an end. We have more than a dark hint of a most terrible revival, even a fearful resurrection. The vanquished and dead foe "lived not again till the thousand years were fulfilled." This "till" is an awful word, awakening "a fearful looking for" of coming evil; though, in support of a beloved theory, many have either silently passed it by, or endeavoured to reduce it to a cipher. But, no. We are told of the release of the Archdeceiver, of his tremendous success, and so of the rise of a new kingdom of wickedness and of Satan, in which shall live again, only different in form, the kingdom of the beast, as the beast whose head was wounded to death lived anew, and in still more terrible form, in the beast which rose out of the abyss when the deadly wound was healed,—in fact, as Pagan Rome rose from the dead and lived again in Papal Rome.

(5) "*This is the First Resurrection.*" This may be said to be at once explanatory and descriptive. So ver. 14: "*This is the Second Death*, (even) the lake of fire"; and, we may add, the two greatly help to show, by contrast, the real nature of each. We need not say that around this profoundly interesting subject have gathered the controversies of many generations. Had this been simply called *a resurrection*, perhaps some who strenuously hold it to be certainly *literal*, might have been led to admit at least that it might, like that of the two witnesses, be *symbolical*. For ages the Church of Christ had been to all intents dead; and all might see the propriety of a great revival and extension being thus called *a resurrection*. If England had been so crushed for a single century that comparatively few Englishmen could be found within her borders, she might have been most fitly called dead; and then, had she been raised to greater power and prosperity, with a more numerous population than she ever had before, her restoration could not fail to be regarded as a glorious resurrection. In the rejection of Christ, Paul saw the ruin of the Jewish nation; and then, in contemplating their future con-

version, he uses the well-known words, "what shall the receiving (of them be), but life from the dead?" But, as hinted above, such a change from death to life, in the case of persons or communities, might be called *a* resurrection, or even *the* resurrection of such; but it might be hard or impossible to find any reason for calling it, as here, "*the* first resurrection." This suggests what we deem the main difficulty involved in the consistent interpretation of this whole passage. Nor do we know of any satisfactory solution having been yet given. We have already, we think, clearly set forth the true nature of the death and resurrection implied, as symbolical and not literal, in pointing to the true Christian Church as persecuted and all but annihilated by the false or antichristian Church, and then as, after what we have called the antichristian interregnum, rising as from the tomb and taking its proper place in the world, through the complete removal of the hostile usurper, partly by reconversion and partly by literal destruction. Up to this point, we think there ought to be no difficulty in coming to the certain conclusion that a purely symbolical resurrection can alone be intended. Still, as just said, the great difficulty still remains as to the identification of this special symbolical resurrection with some grand reality, clearly set forth in Scripture, and yet here for the first and only time called by the impressive name, "The First Resurrection." Before proceeding farther, we may here inquire as to this. In doing so, we may remark as follows:—

a. As already suggested, the two expressions, "The Second Death," used in this Book alone, and "The First Resurrection," also just said to be used here alone, cast no little light on one another. As there need be little difficulty in coming to a decided conclusion as to the import of the former, we may begin with it. In ver. 14 we have a most fearful description of it—"And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the Second Death, (even) the lake of fire." Then it is added, ver. 15, "And if any was not written in the Book of Life, he was cast into the lake of fire," that is, he was treated as not of those who had "part in the First Resurrection," and over whom "the Second Death hath no power." In fact, it is thus implied that to have one's name in the Book of Life, and to have part in the first resurrection, are really one and the same thing,—the Book of Life recording all the names of those born again, born in Zion, raised from death to life, partakers of a new or resurrection life, let us think as we may of this first resurrection life. Be it observed, this second death follows what is usually regarded as the final resurrection of all, good and bad alike;

or what pre-millennialists regard as the resurrection of the wicked alone. Be this as it may, it is at least the terrible doom of those who, before death and resurrection, have experienced no second birth, no such resurrection or passing from death to life as Christ expressly declares of all who believe in Him, or of "the dead who hear His voice," and thus "live." This second death is just that implied in the passage whence these words are taken, and to which we shall again refer: John v. 24-9, "All that are in the tombs shall hear His voice, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done ill unto the resurrection of judgment," or of condemnation to this awful punishment, this "second death." This punishment is set forth in various ways throughout the New Testament. Thus, Matt. xxv. 30, "Cast ye out the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth"; and again, ver. 46, "And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life." So Mark ix. 43, "It is good for thee to enter into life maimed, rather than having thy two hands to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire,"—the same fearful figure of the second death as here. We shall give but one more quotation, and that at full length, as seemingly clearly indicating the perfectly contemporaneous judgment of those who escape and of those who suffer "the second death": 2 Thess. i. 3-10, "We are bound to give thanks alway for you, brethren, . . . we ourselves glory in you in the Churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions, and in the afflictions which ye endure; (which is) a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God; to the end that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: if so be that it is a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you, and to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of His power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and (or, even) to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, (even) eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of His might, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believed (because our testimony unto you was believed) in that day." That, then, which in this Book alone is called "the second death," we find fully and fearfully set forth in the whole New Testament, as fearfully by Christ Himself as by Paul or any other. In all cases it follows the Final Judgment.

b. As above indicated, this death of those who reject Christ, who

have not been born again, or who have not experienced what at least might with all propriety be called *a* first resurrection, is just that which all those, so "blessed and holy" as to "have part in *the* first resurrection," are here expressly said to escape. Nay, this here called "*the* first resurrection" must be as truly universal, or as inclusive of all the saints of God, as that second birth, that passing from death to life, which we have just said "might with all propriety be called *a* first resurrection." Does not this suggest more than a probability that the former, however apparently special, is really identical with this common new birth or first resurrection of all saints?

c. This seems to set aside the pre-millennial view of the two resurrections of this chapter—namely, that now in question, and that of vers. 11-15,—the one being that of saints alone, and the other that of the wicked alone,—the latter, too, following the former at a distance of no less than a thousand years, whether taken literally or symbolically. But "the second death" is that, not of those who had simply died once or died before, but of those who had so died without having previously experienced a second birth or first resurrection; so "the first resurrection" is not that of those who rise a thousand years before others who are also to rise from the dead, but that which preserves them from that resurrection which, instead of being a glorious resurrection to eternal life, is a most tremendous resurrection to "the second death." That we may see this the more clearly, we may now treat more fully of the wonderful words of Christ:—

d. John v. 24-9. "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth Him that sent Me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in Himself, even so gave He to the Son also to have life in Himself: and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done ill, unto the resurrection of judgment.*" Here,

First, Christ claims the possession of life like that possessed by the Father; and therefore, as said, ver. 21, "As the Father raiseth the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son also quickeneth

whom He will,"—He possesses and exercises all resurrection power at His own free and wise command. He is just what He elsewhere so sublimely says: John xi. 25, 26, "I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth on Me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die." Here we have, in fact, two kinds of resurrection implied—that of the believer who dies and yet lives again, or rises from the state of physical death; and that of every living and believing one, of every one naturally alive, who, believing on Christ, shall so live as never to die, or shall be so made alive that, natural death being "abolished," or "made of no effect," he "shall not die for ever," or eternally. Be this as it may, our passage implies—

Secondly. That Christ speaks of the human race as "dead,"—"the dead shall hear His voice," even those of whom He said, "Let the dead bury their dead." His great work relates to these, to raise these, who are "dead whilst they live," to a new and eternal life, whilst they are naturally alive, and before they become naturally dead. In fact, the grand redemptive work is that which Paul thus sets forth, Eph. ii. 1-7, "And you (did He quicken), when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins, wherein aforetime ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience; among whom we also all once lived in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest:—but God, being rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, quickened us together with Christ . . . and raised us up with Him, and made us sit with Him in the heavenly (places), in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." Here, and in the words of Paul, 2 Thess. i. 1-10, already quoted, and also 2 Thess. ii. 1-12, to which we have often referred, we have very much fitted to help towards the interpretation of no small part of this Book. Here, we find at once an illustration of Christ's words as to His voice calling the living-dead to a deathless life, and also an illustration of what we find in this vision, namely, of all deceived by Satan being viewed as dead,—“dead in trespasses and sins,” “walking . . . according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience.” However full of natural life, however distinguished for intellectual activity and power, all these are dead towards God, dead as having lost and so being

destitute of Divine spiritual life and of all title, apart from Christ, to even present, not to mention eternal life. Accordingly, as said, the grand work of Christ is to raise mankind out of this state of universal death. As Paul indicates, through the deception of Satan, from the beginning, and according to the whole Bible, all men are alive to self and sin, but dead to righteousness and God. Hence the words of Christ,

Thirdly, "The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." This time had thus, with the work of Christ, already begun, and would doubtless go on throughout the whole course of that work. The "now is" marks the essential difference between this raising from death to life and that afterwards spoken of as the calling forth of those who are said to be "in the tombs," or to have passed through natural death. We have thus two distinct resurrections,—the one before, and the other after, that death,—the former as truly real, however usually viewed as that of the soul alone, as the latter, however generally regarded as that of the body alone. We think it well to remark that the former, though spiritual and pertaining mainly to the soul, really belongs to the entire man. The body does not share in the eternity of the life imparted, but it does share in the energising, purifying, enlivening, rectifying, directing influence of the indwelling, life-giving and life-sustaining presence of "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." We are too apt to forget that the entire person is thus affected, and that, however truly the soul is the real temple, the body or the entire man is again and again spoken of as the temple of God. The body does not clothe the soul as the dress clothes the body. The body is a living part of the entire person. To all intents, then, Christ here refers to "the first resurrection" of every individual man who hears the voice of "the Son of God" and sincerely receives Him. As believers increase in number, this grand "first resurrection" work advances. Let all men receive Him, and all shall share in it, or "the first resurrection" will be universal: the whole race would thus be raised to new divine and spiritual life. In the fullest sense of the expression, "the first resurrection" will have really come. Let generation after generation receive the life-giving Redeemer, say for the mystic period of a thousand years, and the race will live on for that predicted period; whilst "the rest of the dead," the dead that, in previous ages, failed to welcome the Son of God, shall have no successors till the end of that time, when Satan, resuming his deceptive work, checking the flow of the divine life through parent

to child, or through countless channels to countless recipients, bringing about another and most terrible apostasy, will raise up a new race of mere natural men, or of successors to these long buried dead, "the dead in trespasses and sins."

Fourthly. Christ next speaks of a second and very different resurrection, even that of the whole human family, good and bad alike, or at once of those who had part in what we have thus been treating as the first resurrection, and of those who had no such part, during this life, or before they went down to the graves or "tombs" here alluded to. Elsewhere, and again and again, Christ calls this "the resurrection of the last day,"—"the resurrection of life," and "the resurrection of judgment," or condemnation. Between these two our pre-millennial friends would place a period of at least a thousand years; identifying the former with "the first resurrection" of Rev. xx., which they hold to be that of all saints; and identifying the latter with the other resurrection of the same chapter, which they hold to be that of all unconverted sinners. Here Christ puts no such distance between them. He rather speaks of one and the same time: "the hour cometh," as if one and the same time, "in which all that are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth," some to one kind of resurrection, that of life, and some to another kind, that of judgment. Be this as it may, Christ clearly distinguishes between the special resurrection which precedes, and this common resurrection which follows, natural death. Nay, His entire representation corresponds with the view given of the passage under consideration—namely, that "the first resurrection" is just that which precedes natural death, and that the resurrection of "the dead, small and great," seen "standing before the throne," is just that which follows natural death, or that "of life," or of those whose "names are in the Book of Life," and that "of judgment," or of those given over to "the second death."

Fifthly. Whilst the words of Christ most exactly correspond with those of Rev. xx., we do well to notice that the former seem clearly and naturally to suggest, and even to prepare the way for, the peculiar form of the latter. Let us remember that it was John who recorded the wonderful utterance of Christ. He must have been familiar with it during his whole apostolic ministry. Nor could it fail to keep before his mind two distinct risings from death, the one begun and carried on through all time, the other distant and not to take place till the end of time, or that period called "the last day." Though he may never have so named them, they must have often presented themselves to his mind, as they were under this vision, as

a first and second, or as the first and the last resurrection. Never would he fully or formally think of them as the first and the second, for this sufficient reason, that only believers could be said to be the subjects of the former, whilst to unbelievers the latter could not be a second or the second, as they had not experienced the first. If the one had been that of the good alone, and the other that of the bad alone, it would have been quite consistent and proper to call them the first and the second resurrections. All, however, is correctly expressed; and hence we have no reference to the first, as we have to the second death, and no reference to the second, as we have to the first resurrection.

Sixthly. We think we are now prepared to meet what we have regarded as our main difficulty—that of showing how this symbolical resurrection of the Church should be identified with what we have been setting forth as the first resurrection of the race. What is the Church or kingdom? As we do not here speak ecclesiastically, we thus use the words interchangeably. All along we have been regarding it as the Church or kingdom of the twice born, and therefore of the once raised from the dead—in fact, the Church or kingdom of the first resurrection. When this Church or kingdom was symbolically destroyed, or all but suffered a universal death in the death of its representative witnesses, the grand progressive first-resurrection work of Christ was interrupted, virtually stopped during the reign of Antichrist or of the beast. When it again symbolically rose from the dead in the renewed life of “the souls” of its slain representative witnesses, then the same progressive first-resurrection work was renewed. As the revived Church increased, that work advanced. In our day, its progress, however seemingly slow, has been more rapid and satisfactory than it ever has been since the resurrection of the two symbolic witnesses, or since the opening of the glorious Reformation. Let that progress continue—nay, as we may expect, let it be greatly accelerated, or, let “the voice of the Son of God” be heard, and therefore its quickening or first-resurrection power be everywhere felt, and the number of the living will exceed the number of the dead. Further, let all naturally dead mankind hear and respond to that mighty voice, and the Church of the twice born or of the first resurrection will have become universal, and, at the same time, the first resurrection of the human race shall have been gloriously realised. Just let the saints represented by the slain witnesses not only rise to new life, but so multiply as to include that whole race, and to leave none to represent “the dead in sin”; and then by what explanatory or descriptive name could

the vast and most marvellous change be called than that here supplied—" *The First Resurrection* " ? If need be, this will be even the more clearly seen, if we notice what seems usually overlooked. We are apt to think that the descriptive words refer to the clause, " And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years," and not at all to the intervening clause, " But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years should be finished." We think this by no means correct. According to the view above given, the meaning of the whole would be, that when the kingdom of Christ rose to its fully promised and predicted extent, and so embraced the whole race that all dead sinners had become living saints, and no dead sinners remained to represent the persecuting kingdom of the beast or the still wider kingdom of Satan, then would the first resurrection have truly come. Then would Satan, whose kingdom is death, be really cast out of the world or cast into the abyss ; and then would Christ, whose kingdom is life from the dead, be really enthroned, and all men, become saints, would reign with Him.

c. We might have before now treated fully of the pre-millennial view of this vastly important subject. We have, indeed, done so to no small extent. We most freely admit that, at first sight, a physical or literal resurrection appears to be intended. Many most decidedly maintain that nothing else can be fairly allowed. As strongly expressive of this conviction, we may perhaps do best if we quote the words of Alford :—" It will have been long ago anticipated by the readers of this Commentary, that I cannot consent to distort words from their plain sense and chronological place in the prophecy, on account of any considerations of difficulty, or any risk of abuses which the doctrine of the Millennium may bring with it. Those who lived next to the Apostles, and the whole Church for three hundred years, understood them in the literal sense : and it is a strange sight in these days to see expositors who are among the first in reverence of antiquity, complacently casting aside the most cogent instance of consensus which primitive antiquity presents. As regards the text itself, no legitimate treatment of it will extort what is known as the spiritual interpretation now in fashion. If, in a passage where "*two resurrections*" are mentioned, where certain $\psi\upsilon\chi\alpha\iota$ $\epsilon\zeta\eta\sigma\alpha\nu$ at the first, and the rest of the $\nuεκρο\iota$ $\epsilon\zeta\eta\sigma\alpha\nu$ only at the end of a specified period after that first,—if in such a passage the first resurrection may be understood to mean *spiritual* rising with Christ, while the second means *literal* rising from the grave, then there is an end of all significance of language, and Scripture is wiped out as a definite testimony to anything.

If the first resurrection is spiritual, then so is the second, which I suppose none will be hardy enough to maintain: but if the second is literal, then so is the first, which, in common with the whole primitive Church and many of the best modern expositors, I do maintain, and receive as an article of faith and hope." On this we would observe—

(a) This appeal from the argument of the present to the authority of the past hardly consists with right reason. The early interpretation of a profound and intricate book of symbols, like that of the like profound and intricate book of nature, is certain to be very imperfect, the result of first impressions rather than of careful and long-continued investigation. We may allow that, at first sight, it might naturally and universally be inferred that a literal bodily resurrection was most undeniably intended, as that, at first sight, it could not but be inferred that the sun and moon and stars moved round the earth. In both cases the consensus was and could not but be universal. In neither case do we despise antiquity, because we vastly prefer modern light.

(b) The excellent Dean need not have been so infallibly certain that no other and better interpretation could be put upon the words.

(c) Elsewhere the literal and spiritual may be found in the closest juxtaposition, as in the very words of Christ, which point to what are virtually the two resurrections to which Alford refers, John v. 24-9, as we have already seen.

(a) But, as we have also seen, the two resurrections to which Alford refers, and of which he says they must be either *both spiritual* or *both literal*, are of totally different nature. By a strange, but most important oversight, he has been led to identify "the rest of the dead," who are expressly said not to live "until the thousand years are fulfilled," with the whole mass of "the dead, the great and the small," whom John saw "standing before the throne," even the whole risen race of man, and who did not rise from the dead at the end of the thousand years at all, but, as he correctly, but inconsistently states, "at the end of the specified or predicted period after that first." But this "specified period," which followed the Millennium and preceded the final resurrection, was just the "little time" during which Satan was loosed, and so succeeded in deceiving the nations as to raise up the apostate kingdom of Gog and Magog, in whom "the rest of the dead," as predicted, "lived again," the real successors of the overthrown kingdom of Antichrist and of Satan. In this way the argument of Alford totally fails.

(*e*) The main argument is really based on the supposed correspondence between the death of the martyrs and the resurrection of the saints. The former being personal and literal, the latter must be the same. We have fully dealt with this already. We have shown that the martyrs were representative of the Church. As the Church was representatively destroyed in them, so they rose again in the Church which they had represented. Besides, as we have also shown, if we must take the slain witnesses literally, we must take the risen witnesses literally; and then no other saints can be said to rise literally from the dead, and, instead of a glorious resurrection of all saints, we shall have, what none will allow, a resurrection of comparatively very few, certainly so few that it could with no propriety be called, as the very hope and joy of the Christian heart, "The First Resurrection."

(*f*) Those who hold that the saints are endowed with judicial authority, and that they reign over multitudes of unconverted people, totally forget that this is utterly inconsistent with the whole scope of this passage. Especially will this appear on the supposition that Christ and His risen saints will seek the salvation of the surviving and unbelieving nations, as this would most assuredly imply that Satan was yet at liberty and yet successfully engaged in his work of deadly deception.

(*g*) To what we have already said, and chiefly from the words of Christ in the Gospel of John, we might have added much to show that other portions of Scripture are very far from favourable to such a literal resurrection as so many ardent and devoted Christians now maintain. Perhaps it might have been well here to give a comparative view of the two kinds of resurrections here causing so much debate. We think such an one of the whole race and affecting very many generations, and, whilst securing incalculable good in this world, preparing the vastly greater part of all for an eternity of blessedness and glory in the next, inconceivably transcends such an one as is supposed to bring down the blessedness and glory of heaven to the earth, at the expense of the salvation or very existence of a countless multitude of human beings, who, according to it, will have no being, as we believe they shall have, during the long and many ages, not of a mere literal, but of a vastly greater and more glorious mystical, Millennium.

(*h*) However, we shall rather here deal with a difficulty or an objection which may not unnaturally suggest itself to some minds: namely, If the first resurrection be thus the progressive redemptive work of all the ages, why should it be here represented as yet

indefinitely distant, or as apparently only begun, at the opening of a mystic Millennium? To those who overlook or have not marked a most important feature of these apocalyptic visions, to which we have had often to refer, this will appear thoroughly inconsistent. The feature alluded to is that the objects symbolised are usually set forth, not as in the course of development, but as at their highest or maximum existence. Perhaps our most appropriate illustration will be found in the vision of the rise of the beast from the abyss, with the head, which had been wounded to death, fully restored to life. He was seen by John rising out of the sea in all the completeness of his growth; and it was said of him (chap. xiii. 5), "And there was given to him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies: and there was given to him authority to continue forty and two months." The beginning of this appointed period of antichristian rule, we cannot well admit to be earlier than the opening of the seventh century. Such, according to the vision, is the apparent date of the rise of this terribly persecuting power. Of its previous existence, or of its progressive development, we have not the slightest intimation. That had been so far given in a previous vision. But what is the simple fact? The apostle Paul distinctly assures us that that very beast or antichristian power had its origin in his own day, that "the mystery of lawlessness," whence this "man of sin" was to spring, "doth already work." Paul further describes that mysterious one as (he) "whose coming is according to the working of Satan." The satanic evolution of this "beast from the abyss" was thus the work of six or more centuries; and yet, as we have found, in the vision, this long period, this seemingly slow growth, is entirely passed over, and only the fully developed form is presented to our view. The very same holds good in the case before us. The vision sets forth the first resurrection as come to its full or maximum development; but, as in the case of the antichristian kingdom, we find in this vision no reference to the long period and manifold progressive work required for the world-wide establishment of the kingdom of Christ. To discover the whole truth concerning it, we must have recourse to other portions of this Book, to the prophecies of the Old Testament and the histories of the New, and even to the history of the Christian Church from apostolic times to our own.

f. We cannot yet pause here. As this glorious revival and universal establishment of the redemptive kingdom, fitly called the First Resurrection of the fallen and spiritually dead race of man, is so peculiar, and the vision of it apparently so unique and wonder-

ful, we seem bound, even at the risk of some repetition, to refer to one or two instances of like symbolic representation.

First. We have already sufficiently fully referred to the seemingly literal, but really symbolical, slaughter and resurrection of the two witnesses. We shall only add that, in their case, by even those who will admit of no symbolic sense in the case before us, such a sense is fully admitted. So far as the body of the Christian ministry is regarded, death symbolises reduction to silence, whilst resurrection means restoration to the full "liberty of prophesying." But, so far as the Christian people or community is concerned, they will, we think most inconsistently, admit of no symbolic interpretation: all must be taken literally. The martyrs died literally, and they must literally rise from the dead; though they strangely and most illogically forget, that, in holding that not the martyrs alone, but the entire number of the saints thus rise, they actually make the former, a comparatively small and select company, represent the latter, even the incomparably greater multitude of the faithful, and thus unconsciously introduce the very symbolism which they so decidedly exclude.

Secondly. Simply because of its importance in itself, and even as, to no small extent, the original of this, we must once more point to the most striking vision of Ezekiel, usually called "The Vision of Dry Bones." Both visions relate to the people of God. Both set forth like depression, like dispersion, like Babylonish captivity—indeed, like destruction. Both presuppose the entire dissolution of organised communities, Churches, kingdoms. Both represent these as destroyed, dead, buried. Both most wonderfully, yet very differently, suitably set forth a resurrection, not only to former life and prosperity, but to greatly higher life and prosperity than had been enjoyed before. The language of the one is just as strong and expressive as that of the other. We may add, what is not a little remarkable and confirmatory of the like symbolic nature of both, that both are followed by a vision of Gog and Magog. Ezek. xxxvii. 1-14: "The hand of the Lord was upon me, and He carried me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones; . . . there were very many . . . and they were very dry. And He said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, Thou knowest. And He said unto me, Prophesy over these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. . . . And so I prophesied as I was commanded. . . . And the bones came together, bone to his bone . . . and flesh came up, and skin covered them above: but there was

no breath in them. Then said He unto me, Prophesy unto the wind . . . Thus saith the Lord God: come from the four winds, O breath, (or O spirit), and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army." So much for the vision. Not only was there a resurrection, but a resurrection to higher life and power,—as the last clause suggests, "*an exceeding great army.*" "Then said He unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost: we are clean cut off. Therefore prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, O My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, and caused you to come up out of your graves, O My people. And I will put My Spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I will place you in your own land: and ye shall know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord." Jehovah did all this; and a most glorious and memorable work it was. Never before or since was a nation so dissolved, a people so destroyed or led captive, a country so laid waste, its capital and temple so demolished, the remnant of captives so few on the one hand and so held under a mighty power on the other, and yet afterwards, according to express Divine prophecy and promise, all restored to more than former prosperity, as this one divinely chosen and peculiar nation and country. When the restored life and re-organisation came, at the elsewhere appointed time and predicted manner, the wonderful result was most fitly celebrated in one of the finest and sweetest of "the songs of Zion":—Ps. clxxvi, "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like unto them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing. Then said they among the nations, The Lord hath done great things for them. The Lord hath done great things for us; (whereof) we are glad."

In reading the words of Ezekiel, we should naturally infer, at least if we forgot the symbolical character of the vision, that the Lord would do the work Himself and in some short period of time. However, we find it took a very considerable time to accomplish it, by the use of manifold means, through the triumph of Cyrus and Darius over Babylon, and by many a vigorous, persevering and self-denying effort of their own. So in the case before us. The Christian Church suffered more at the hand of mystic Babylon

than did even ancient Israel at that of the literal Babylon. She has been rising from the dead for ages. Babylon has greatly, but far from completely, fallen. Till the full restoration of the revived Church come, a long time may yet intervene; Christ and His people must continue to go on from victory to victory. The promised resurrection, like that of Israel, may take ages to come. Already those who enjoy the rich blessings of the more than initial resurrection work, may well take up the words of the Psalmist quoted above, "God hath done great things for us."

If we only deeply pondered the terrible condition of the true Church of the darkest period of antichristian captivity, and vividly contrast with that the freedom and the peace and the power of present times, cold and thankless would be our hearts if, as in those ancient times, we were not "like unto them that dream," if "our mouth" was not "filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing." Whatever we may be or do, it is at least true that "they say among the nations," of even the once terribly persecuting and antichristian Church, "The Lord hath done great things for them." Let all, then, gratefully rejoice in this, and go on courageously because of it. Let us so see the hand of God in this great work, even so far as it has already been accomplished, that the words of Ezek. xxxvii. 13, 14, may be true of us, "Behold, I will open your graves," as He certainly has done, ". . . and ye shall know that I am Jehovah . . . ye shall know that I Jehovah have spoken it, and performed it, saith Jehovah"; that is, in our own case, the words spoken by the Spirit in the Book, and performed in our own experience of the not a little advanced work of this "First Resurrection," ought indeed to make us believe that Jesus is indeed the Christ, that Jehovah hath indeed "spoken it, and performed it," and that the resurrection work, now so far advanced and already so glorious, cannot possibly cease till all has been accomplished, till Christ and His saints possess the kingdom, fill the whole earth, and, for the mystic thousand years, have no pagan, no papal, no antichristian, no godless power or nation to hurt or destroy or to war against them.

Thirdly. In illustrating one prophecy by another, we do well to make use of the words of the same prophet, or of their common author, if we can fitly do so. It will be remembered that the main point to be here illustrated is that of a person and community living as if raised from the dead in some other person or community. This has been finely illustrated by not a few interpreters of this Book or of portions of it. No finer example can be found, the more

especially as it is a Scriptural one, expressly sealed with the unerring word of Christ Himself, than that of Elijah. Than the last words of the Old Testament, perfectly suited as they are to close that part of the sacred volume by pointing over quite a gulf of time to the opening of the other, with its record of the ministry of Christ and His Divinely appointed and predicted forerunner, none could well set forth, or before the fulfilment suggest the absolute certainty, of the resurrection, or rather descent from heaven, and pre-Messianic ministry of the great prophet and reformer of Israel. The Jews actually and, so far as the mere words were concerned, most naturally expected his literal advent. When John the Baptist was asked, "Art thou Elijah?" he expressly answered, "I am not." Yet, Christ seems as expressly to say the reverse. Coming down from the mountain of transfiguration, where Moses and Elijah appeared along with their transfigured Lord, to the apostles Peter and James and John¹ Christ, asked by them "Why say the scribes that Elijah must first come?" answered and said, "Elijah indeed cometh, and shall restore all things" (doubtless meaning that so it had been promised or predicted): "but I say unto you, that Elijah is come already, and they knew him not, but did unto him whatsoever they listed. Even so shall the Son of man also suffer of them. Then understood the disciples that He spake unto them of John the Baptist." Here, as we have said, Christ seems to contradict the denial of John. However, John answered the question put to him according to its intended import, "Art thou *literally* Elijah?" and he answered according to the strictest truth. Christ, again, spoke unerringly, according to His perfect knowledge of the Elijah intended by Malachi, whose words He did not and could not misinterpret, as those of the Apocalypse have been so long and so often misunderstood. The above apparent contradiction is most instructively explained by the words of the angel who announced the birth of John to his father Zacharias: "He shall be great in the sight of the Lord. . . . And he shall go before His face *in the spirit and power of Elijah*, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children," etc.—the very work of the predicted Elijah. Here we find a perfect illustration of a mystic or symbolic resurrection, that of one man rising up in the future and living and acting in the person of another, who comes or is raised up by God "in His spirit and power." So the martyr Church has already so far risen from the dead in the persons of the nobler or martyr spirits of all these Reformation times; and as Christ said of the Jews, it may be safely said of Christians, even of certain of these spirits themselves, of our

own and of other days, "And they knew them not." Yes; the first resurrection has begun long ago, though it may not be completed, as the expression fully implies, for a long time to come.

Fourthly. So much for individual men living in those of after times, who breathed the same spirit, displayed the same energy, and represented and upheld the same cause. Let us turn now to an example of the same thing in the case of a community, to be found in this Book. We refer to the contrasted Church of Antichrist or kingdom of the beast: chap. xiii. 3, "And (I saw) one of his (the beast's) heads as though it had been smitten (or, slain) unto death; and his death-stroke was healed: and the whole earth wondered after the beast"; connected with chap. xvii. 7, 8, "And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou wonder? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and the ten horns. The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and is about to come up out of the abyss, and to go into perdition. And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, (they) whose name hath not been written in the book of life, . . . when they behold the beast, how that he was, and is not, and shall come." Here we have one empire clearly represented as a beast that *once was*, that now *is not*, and that *shall come*,—*Pagan Rome* that *was*, that had *ceased to be*, and that was about *to come again*;—in what form? In itself? No. In another? certainly. In what other? in *Papal Rome*. Why? because Papal Rome came "*in the spirit and power of*" *Pagan Rome*, as did John the Baptist "*in the spirit and power of Elijah*." Pagan Rome, "a head of the beast wounded unto death," therefore dead and buried, yet with "deadly wound or death-stroke healed," therefore risen from the dead, and that in the character, not of a head, but of a beast, as we have seen, once alive, slain, and raised from the dead, not from a mere earthly grave, but "from the abyss," the abode of the dragon. What could be more exact, whether in the way of comparison or of contrast? The Christian Church *was*; that Church became a *martyr Church*, or *ceased to be*, or *as if dead and buried*; and that Church shall *rise from the dead*, experience a glorious *resurrection*, and the *saints*, constituting its renewed organic body, "shall live and reign with Christ a thousand years." The parallel is complete. All is symbolic in the case of the wounded head restored to life, or slain beast raised by Satan from the dead,—of Pagan Rome *dead* and *raised* from the dead in Papal Rome. All is also and as truly symbolic in the case of the Christian Church,—*dead* and

buried as a martyr Church,—*raised from the dead* in the Church of the first resurrection and of the Millennium.

(6) "*Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection.*" We take these words to refer directly to the millennial period, or that during which the Church on earth has reached its highest prosperity, or that of what we have viewed as the first resurrection of the human race. We make this remark because all Christians from the beginning have part essentially, though not synchronically, in the same resurrection, as all Christians are alike those "who hear the voice of the Son of man and live," or rise from death to life; and yet may be very far from enjoying the full blessedness and holiness here intended. Instead of reigning with Christ in millennial glory and blessedness, multitudes of them may have most fearfully suffered with Him and for Him during the long ages of oppression and martyrdom. In a very high sense they were then most richly blessed and most highly honoured by God to be made witnesses for Him and for Christ, "faithful unto death," however despised and hated of men. Still the blessedness here especially alluded to is that, not of suffering, but of reigning with Christ on earth. So as to millennial holiness. All Christians are spoken of as *saints* or *holy* persons throughout the sacred writings. Thus Heb. iii. 1, "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling,"—the very calling, already referred to, of the voice of Him who is "the Resurrection and the Life"; yet, though many a follower of Christ may have been raised, during these pre-millennial ages, to as high a state of holiness and goodness and nobleness of soul as those here referred to, we need not fear to conclude that, as a whole, the millennial Church, emphatically, as it is the restored Church *of the martyrs*, will rise to far higher holiness and breathe a far purer heavenly spirit than, also taken as a whole, the Church of any previous age, Peculiar holiness, then, and blessedness will belong to the saints of the glorious times, here so sublimely symbolised, as they have been clearly predicted throughout the whole prophetic Scriptures.

The same blessedness is alluded to in the words already treated of, chap. xix. 9, "And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they that are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb." The bride is one and the same Church of Christ, from first to last in time, and from the first to all eternity; that is to say, the bride is to be viewed under two distinct aspects—*first* as the Church or kingdom of Christ on earth, and *next* as the Church or kingdom of Christ in heaven. Here the former is specially referred to. It is alto-

gether unscriptural and wrong to treat the Church on earth as not "the bride and wife of the Lamb," or "the marriage of the Lamb" as not taking place in this world before the literal or physical resurrection. The contrast between the false Church and the true, the woman seated on the beast and the woman clothed with the sun, not only illustrates, but fully demonstrates this. The former is the perverted Church, the professed bride of Christ, married to another who has wickedly usurped the very throne of Christ.

Up to the time of the rise of this Antichrist "from the abyss," or of the perversion and infidelity of the professing bride, the Church of Christ was the visible and recognised bride of Christ. During the triumphant reign of Antichrist and his antichristian wife, Christ and His true bride dwelt in the wilderness, to all intents as if they had ceased to be, or had been numbered with the very dead. When the two slain witnesses rose from the death of enforced silence to the new life and liberty of inspired and open testimony, Christ and His bride began to reappear. Though not yet out of the wilderness, they may be seen by all but the blindest eyes, at least as in the dim distance. They now attract the awakening attention of the whole world; and, as the heralds of the coming King run to and fro throughout the whole earth, all men begin to ask, "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved, looking forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, terrible as an army with banners?" Who is she? Why, the same bride who entered the wilderness when pursued by her foe, only now more fully grown, though by no means yet come to her maturity,—the same bride who, as a martyr Church, seemed long dead and out of sight, but, in the renewed Church, seen everywhere rising as from the dead, is destined to appear in all the maturity and beauty of her terrestrial womanhood, the Church of the first resurrection; the marriage past, the bride become the married wife of Jesus Christ, living and reigning together for the one symbolic thousand years: who can tell for how many literal thousands of years?

(7) "*Over these the second death hath no power.*" Here we have the source of endless blessedness and glory to all the twice-born, to all of every age "risen with Christ," pre-millennial or millennial. If natural death has been called "the king of terrors," by what expressive name shall we call this inconceivably more awful death? Well may it be here set forth in connection with the saints of this most glorious period! Still, it is not more true of them than of the humblest believers of any previous time. How grand this

precious assurance! Even natural death can do little evil to the genuine Christian. From being a foe, it is turned into a friend. Through its gloomy portal the Christian simply passes from one stage of his new eternal life to a higher. How glorious the human race even now, if, with all its poverty and distress and suffering and mortality, Christ were formed in every heart, the hope of glory! The very thought of an immortal race is most glorious. How sublime the idea which Christ has given us of a son and heir of God in the person of a poor beggar, neglected of men, covered with sores, and yet to be conveyed from earth to heaven by the ministry of angels of light! How unspeakably glorious the prospect of this world of ours being tenanted for many generations by such only as shall have passed from death to life, and as shall never more be under the power or within the reach of any "second death"!

It may not be out of place here to add that the very mode of expression here employed seems far more befitting what we have maintained than the hypothesis of a literal or bodily resurrection. It would seem quite needless to call risen and glorified saints either blessed or holy because they are beyond the power of "the second death." In this case, this most beautiful, precious and touching assurance would appear entirely out of place and superfluous. We should rather expect, what we find in other words again and again elsewhere, "Blessed are the holy, or, blessed are all true saints, for they shall have part in the first resurrection, and so never come under the power of the second death." This would be a slightly altered form of the few expressive words of chap. ii. 7, 11, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the Tree of Life," connected with "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death," and both connected with I John v. 1-5, in which we are told who thus overcome and so escape this terrible power, even those who are born of God, or the twice born, or those of the first resurrection in the spiritual and not in the literal or bodily sense,— "whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God. . . . Whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, (even) our faith." Faith, the second birth or first resurrection, the blessedness and holiness of the words before us, victory over the world and over all sin, eternal life, no second death. Such is the declared order of all Scripture; and such also is the implied order here.

(8) *But they shall be priests of God and of Christ;*" or, as in chap. i. 6, "made a kingdom, priests unto His God and Father."

Here we may just repeat what we have already said, that, highly exalted as these millennial saints are, they are not said to rise in rank or in any degree above those of apostolic times, and therefore of all pre-millennial times, even those persecuted and virtually dethroned by Antichrist. All are one grand and royal priesthood, one holy nation, one peculiar people, though they may not all enjoy the special blessings of the unopposed and triumphant reign of millennial times.

(9) "*And shall reign with Him.*" This expression, used, as we have just seen, of all saints of all the ages, seems ever to suggest the idea of reigning over others, as if over the unconverted nations of the world. The absence of the words "with Him" from those above quoted is of no consequence; for they could not so reign unless "with Christ." Perhaps the reign of Christ and the saints over any others—say, over unconverted nations—may be said to take place, or to be seen, from the Reformation or from our own times to the beginning of the Millennium, rather than during the Millennium itself, when all nations shall be converted, or when "all men shall be blessed in Christ; and all nations shall call Him blessed." Even now, to how great an extent do Christians really rule in Great Britain and in the United States, and so through them, especially the former, rule over the nations of the world? It will continue to be so more and more really and conspicuously, till "the kingdom of the world is become (the kingdom) of our Lord and of His Christ." Then there will be no hostile people to govern. However, this idea of reigning over others is at least not necessarily intended, as we find the same said of saints in glory: chap. xxii. 5, "The Lord God shall give them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever." King and kingdom shall finally rise to such harmony and peace, such mutual love and service, that all without exception may be truly said to reign as kings in the perfect and heavenly state.

(10) "*A thousand years.*" Not a few have taken this expression literally. They have given various reasons for so doing, and for not here applying the year-day principle. Some have been carried away with the idea of the whole history of the world extending to no more than seven thousand years—"a week of millenaries," of which the next and last is to be regarded as "the Sabbath of the world." This may seem a very pretty theory. We confess we cannot see so much as one inch of ground for such a theory to rest upon, in Scripture or out of it. Bishop Wordsworth has, with very many others, taken a better view. He says, "There is no instance

in the Apocalypse where the number *a thousand* is to be understood *literally*. . . . It is generally combined with expressions significant of *completeness*. Thus the total number of the sealed is *144 thousand*; twelve *thousand* from each of the twelve tribes. The men slain by the earthquake in the sixth trumpet are seven *thousand*. The breadth of the heavenly city is twelve *thousand* furlongs. What, then, is the meaning of the term *a thousand years*? Among the Jews the term *three years and a half* was a chronological expression significant of a time of *suffering*. And the term *a thousand years* was a chronological expression which designated the *Day of the Messiah*, or the time of the *dispensation of Christ*. *Dies Messias mille anni*." Then that whole dispensation may well be called "the day of salvation," "the day of grace," "the day of Christ." The mystic Millennium here spoken of, viewed as the time of the triumphant power of the gospel, and of the highest, widest, longest prosperity of the Church, may well and peculiarly be called "*The Day of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*."

All before is but the long dawn of what we may anticipate is at least a vastly longer day. More commonly than now the students of prophecy were wont to apply the same principle to the interpretation of this symbolic Millennium as to that of the like symbolic period of 1260 days; making the glorious terrestrial reign of Christ and His people to extend to no less than 360,000 years. To very many, this will appear the extreme of extravagance. It may be so; but we would regard it as very greatly more reasonable and more likely than the reduction of that inconceivably grand and literally infinitely precious period to one thousand years, or to one-seventh of, in this case, the miserably short existence of man upon the earth. We do not apply the year-day principle to these thousand years; but we cannot believe that the reign of Antichrist has been in this Divine and harmonious prophecy, represented as extending to no more than three years and a half, that exceedingly short period meaning no less than one thousand two hundred and sixty years, and yet that the reign of Christ should be represented by the vastly larger period of a thousand years, and yet that vastly larger period should extend to a much shorter time. Put the two thus: $3\frac{1}{2}$ years = 1260 years: 1000 years = $1260 - 260 = 1000$ years; or thus: 1000 years are more than 285 times greater than $3\frac{1}{2}$ years; and yet $3\frac{1}{2}$ years represent 260 years more than we are to understand a thousand years to represent. No. If 1000 years does not represent 360,000 years, as the year-day system implies, it ought surely to represent at least many thousands of years. We take the

symbolic number to be simply a large round number, intended to represent an immense, indefinite period of time. We may come to treat of this again. We shall only add, that those who thus long live and reign, do so, not as individuals, but as forming one collective kingdom, or in one unbroken succession of constituent members; just as the antichristian kingdom lived on during its predicted period in the persons of those who adhered to it, and upheld it in a like succession of people.

3. *Vers. 7-10.* "And when the thousand years are finished, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall come forth to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to the war: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went over the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city; and fire came down out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

(1) "*And when the thousand years are finished.*" According to the view thus suggested, this carries our minds down the stream of time to a very far-off future. The term of the life of man on earth has well-nigh come to a close. The elect of many lands and ages have been gathered to their eternal home; only a comparatively little period of such a new and final apostasy as the voice of prophecy would alone lead us to anticipate, has yet to follow; and then the real or literal second coming of Christ, to which all Christians look forward, with its universal judgment and consummation of all things, will close the ages of time and begin those of eternity. During the long period of Divine Light and Life and Love, the mighty work of redemption will so advance that, in the end, the redeemed, the true and immortal Israel of God, will, we might almost say, equal the stars of heaven, visible and invisible, in actual multitude; every redeemed and glorified child of God and subject of His eternal kingdom more precious than any material world; and the entire new creation of the redeemed all-worthy of Him who is the infinitely glorious Author of the old and universal.

But, why should we thus write? How glorious the pre-millennial Advent and the supposed literal resurrection of departed saints, with its reign of these glorified ones with their glorified Saviour and King, to the minds of those who so believe and anticipate! Ah! at what expense? Surely there can be no real gain,—may there be no loss?—for saints to come down from heaven, where they are

with Christ already, to dwell with Him in this inferior earth of ours. Well may it be maintained that a thousand years is long enough for them to be kept out of their higher, more glorious and eternal Home! For, what are they to do whilst on earth? Are they literally to slay the wicked, even all the unconverted? Then surely this could easily be effected through the elements of nature,—the very fire which is here said fully to destroy the final apostates. Are they to convert the unconverted? Then, happily, the kingdom of Christ will be enlarged, though by no means to the vast and glorious extent of which the many thousands of years, above suggested, will admit. What, however, is to become of the converted of those supposed literal millennial years? Are they to die, and to be raised up with the wicked in order to judgment? or are they to be changed, like the saints of the day of the supposed coming of Jesus Christ? If to die and rise at the general resurrection, then that form of the pre-millennial theory which implies a first resurrection of all the good and an after resurrection of all the wicked must be entirely abandoned. If to be changed on conversion, then no holy families are to arise in succession during the whole millennial period. Accessions to the kingdom of Christ must come from the families of the unconverted alone. In any case, unless only saintly spirits clothed in glorified immortal bodies are to live on earth, we have a most wonderful admixture of mortal and immortal, with a second coming of Christ, in external glory it may be, but also in all the interior or spiritual humiliation of the first, that of living on the same earth and among the same class of men.

But, if only the risen saints are to spend "the Sabbath of the world" on earth, then two important inferences follow. *First*. The number of the redeemed will be complete at the beginning of the Millennium; so that the kingdom of Satan from the time of the Fall down to that beginning will vastly outnumber all the saints constituting the kingdom of Christ, or, in so far as the actual conflict of responsible agents is concerned, Satan will have triumphed immensely and most awfully over the promised Deliverer of the fallen human race; and the first and all-inclusive promise, and therefore the whole prophetic scriptures, which are just a progressively unfolded form of that promise, must be reversed, and we must substitute for it,— "He shall gather a comparatively small kingdom out of thine, but thou shalt retain thy vastly greater kingdom to the end." Some would say, "No: all who die in infancy must be put into the kingdom of the saved." Be it so: would this imply a final glorious triumph over Satan in the great battle of light and darkness, of good

and evil? What else would it imply? It would imply that all who die in infancy are to be raised to people this small earth and to live and reign a thousand years, *Secondly*. If only saints are to spend "the Sabbath of the world" on earth, we must infer that even these risen saints can fall from grace and be deceived by Satan, as otherwise the rise of Gog and Magog, the countless hosts which are to assail the sacred camp and beloved city, would be absolutely impossible. In fact, the prediction of this second and final apostasy is utterly fatal to the pre-millennial theory, unless that theory admits of a continuation of the race from generation to generation, yet under the reign of natural death, and destined in the end to be so deluded as to become, even in the presence of the glorified King and kingdom, sceptical of their very existence as glorious and immortal, most intensely wicked, and desirous of their destruction, as also so insanely daring as to propose to fight an army sufficiently numerous to fill the earth, and that had literally lived a thousand years on earth, and which they could not but know that it would be just as foolish to expect to conquer as it would be for our men of science to attempt to quench the light of the sun. Only admit that the first resurrection is that of the dead in sin and Satan to life in Christ and to God, and all this chaotic darkness disappears, and this sadly misunderstood prediction is seen to bring to light the whole future of our race just as clearly and as hopefully as Christian heart could wish.

(2) "*Satan shall be loosed out of his prison.*" On the supposition of such a Millennium as we have just alluded to of the prosperity of the Church and kingdom of Christ for many generations, these words can be easily understood, and seen to make a disclosure in perfect harmony with the nature of things. If, as we have pointed out, Satan is bound and imprisoned, or is so kept in check that he cannot deceive the nations, by the attractive force of Christ,—“And I, if I be lifted up,” etc.,—then, just as in the case of any prosperous Church of the present time, if the great prosperous Church of the future should grow cold, Christ and His Cross losing their wonted power over the hearts of many, Satan will again have his former advantage, his bonds will be so far relaxed, his old deceptive work will be renewed, a new apostasy will take place, and the result here predicted will follow.

(3) "*And shall come forth to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to the war: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.*" The idea underlying all this is borrowed from that of ancient

Israel raised, as we have found, as if from the very dead, restored to their own land, and so changed in heart and life by the Spirit of God, as to enjoy a blessedness virtually millennial. "The reproach of the peoples (Ezek. xxxvi. 15), is to be endured no more;" ver. 26, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you"; ver. 28, "and ye shall be My people, and I will be your God": ver. 35, "and they shall say, This land which was desolate is become like the garden of Eden." Then follows the fulfilment, chap. xxxvii., as symbolised by the "vision of dry bones." Vers. 15-28: Judah and Ephraim, all true Israelites, shall be united, only one kingdom shall exist; "so shall they be My people, and I will be their God. And My servant David," doubtless the True David, "shall be King over them; and they all shall have one shepherd Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them: it shall be an everlasting covenant with them. . . . My tabernacle also shall be with them: I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And the nations shall know that I am the LORD that sanctify Israel (or, I the LORD do sanctify Israel), when My sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore." This we take to be the prophetic description of the millennial age, one from the point of view of the time of Ezekiel, the prophecy uniting ancient with spiritual Israel. Consequently the prophecy which immediately follows, as to Gog and Magog, may be regarded as descriptive of the last enemies of Israel. They come from "the uttermost parts of the earth." Chap. xxxviii. 3-9, "I am against thee, O Gog, prince of Rosh (or, chief prince of Meshech) Meshech, and Tubal. . . . I will bring thee forth, and all thine army . . . Persia, Cush, and Put with them. . . . Gomer and all his hordes. . . . Togarmah . . . even many nations with thee. . . . Thou shalt ascend, thou shalt come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land" (of Israel), "thou and all thy hordes, and many peoples with thee." Vers. 17, 18, "Thus saith the Lord God: Art thou he of whom I spake in old time by My servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days for (many) years that I would bring thee against them? It shall come to pass in that day, when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord God, that My fury shall come up into My nostrils." Chap. xxxix. 4-6, "Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel. . . . And I will send a fire on Magog, and on them that dwell securely in the isles." All the multitude of Gog is destroyed. Israel shall dwell safely in their own land, and Jehovah will not "hide His face any more from them."

These quotations not only give a key to those before us, but account for the form given to the description of the character and destiny of the last enemies of the cause and kingdom of Jesus Christ. The nations deceived by Satan imply the existence of such nations throughout the Millennium as could thus be deceived, or as were thus actually deceived in the end of it. Their coming up from all quarters may be taken symbolically rather than literally and geographically. Their number will be vast. Here, however often before, we find the main fulfilment of the words of 2 Peter iii. 3, 4, "In the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." In the end of the long reign of Jesus, to whose true Second Coming the saints of all ages had been looking as the object of their most glorious hope, many would begin to doubt and to disbelieve. "The love of many would wax cold." Unbelief would secretly spread. By-and-by open Infidelity, nay, open Atheism, would appear. Mingled with the saints who still adhered fully and faithfully to their ever-present, but unseen, Head and King, they would form everywhere a separate party. The war of opinion would begin. The interests of the faithful and of the faithless would be different. The result is strongly set forth in the words which follow. They will act as if "gathered together to the war."

(4) "*And they went over the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city.*" As said, we need not take these words geographically. The camp and capital of the true millennial Israel simply represents that Israel as the army and people, the faithful followers, of Jesus Christ. We need not suppose that these enemies would in the end use no carnal and deadly weapons. They were prepared or preparing to do so. The "beloved city" is evidently that of the next two chapters. This city and camp reminds us of the city and camp of mystic Babylon, destroyed by the Rider on the white horse and His army, or rather by those whose weapons of destruction He employed as "the sword of His mouth." The camp would be outside the walls, and for the protection of the city. Of course this is figurative. It helps us to understand, or rather confirms, the view taken of "the great winepress," which "was trodden without the city" of mystic Babylon, the camp of the protecting army being there, and the great battle by which the city was captured taking place there accordingly. Here, no bloody battle seems to have been fought. Jehovah of Israel was

"a wall of fire around them, and the glory in the midst of them." Hence,

(5) "*And fire came down out of heaven, and devoured them.*" We need not say that this, as well as what goes before, we are to take figuratively, yet figuratively of a great and terrible reality. We shall not dwell upon it. The history of the world has come virtually to an end. The destruction referred to may have been entirely miraculous, and coincident with or only shortly before the real second coming of Christ and the universal resurrection, when those saints who, as Paul says (1 Cor. xv. 51, 52) are alive shall not die, but be gloriously changed,—"*Behold, I tell you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*" Then shall follow the great, the literal, the universal Judgment.

(6) "*And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*" The first and last great enemy of Christ and His people is thus declared to perish, and that for ever. This lake of fire is, ver. 14, called the second death. As "death and Hades" are said to be cast into it, the natural conclusion would seem to be, that it is here intended to set forth the final absolute destruction of all said to be cast into it. However, those here spoken of are declared to live on, and to suffer on, even to be "tormented for ever and ever." If taken literally, the words are the strongest to be found in the whole Bible in support of the doctrine of the positive endless suffering of those who reject the great salvation. They are more express than even those of Christ, which many deem absolutely decisive. However, "everlasting punishment" does not necessarily involve everlasting positive or conscious suffering, any more than the expression "everlasting destruction." But here the suffering or torment seems expressly to mean no loss of being or of consciousness, but perpetual existence in a state of misery. At the same time, we do not suppose that words, used in a book of symbols from beginning to end, and even here using the most highly figurative terms, can be made the basis of a decisive argument in the great and more serious controversy now carried on within the Christian Church. Thus, if the very similar words, Isaiah xxxiv. 5-10, were taken literally, we should have been greatly mistaken: "*Behold, My sword . . . shall come down upon Edom. . . . For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, the year of recom-*

pense in the controversy of Zion. And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever." Here the idea of utter destruction is intended; yet the cause of that destruction is spoken of as everlasting: "It shall not be quenched *night nor day*; the smoke thereof shall *go up for ever*." We have no thought of dealing here with the awful question referred to, which certainly ought never to be treated unless under the deepest sense of responsibility, and along with the most careful and prayerful study of the whole Scripture testimony regarding it. We make the above remarks rather to warn against hasty and doubtful inference in so serious a matter. Satan is here represented as no longer merely restricted as before in respect to his deceptive powers, but as so punished and so destroyed as an evil agent, that he can never more disturb or destroy any part of God's or of Christ's universal, holy, and everlasting kingdom.

4. *Vers. 11-15.* "And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened: and another book was opened, which is (the Book) of Life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, (even) the lake of fire. And if any one was not found written in the Book of Life, he was cast into the lake of fire."

(1) "*And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat upon it.*" This we regard as the vision of that great, universal, final Judgment of mankind, good and bad, of which we have the clearest and most undoubted announcements throughout the Sacred Scriptures. Some maintain that here we find the resurrection and the judgment of the wicked alone, and that "the first resurrection" is that of the righteous alone. We think we have said more than enough to disprove the correctness of this. This vision brings us to what is elsewhere called "The Last Day." It would certainly be strange indeed, and more than strange, if Jesus meant "a last day," or "the last day," when after that day there intervened a thousand years, literal or mystical, between it and the time here intended, which

must assuredly be "the last day" or at least the last part of that day. Yet this must be the case, that is, "the last day" must consist of three distinct and successive parts,—a day of the resurrection of the righteous, a day of the reign of the righteous, and a day of the resurrection of the wicked—if Christ meant the first of these, when He over and over again declared, John vi. 39, 40, 44, 54, of all, who became true disciples, that He would "*raise them up at the last day.*" This ought to stamp the mystical character of "the first resurrection" of this chapter, with the express authority of Christ Himself; whilst, as we go along, we shall find reason for concluding that this is none else than that to which Paul refers, Acts xxiv. 15, "There shall be a resurrection both of the just and unjust," or that which Christ, after alluding to what we have referred to as virtually a first resurrection, so solemnly speaks, John v. 28, 29, "Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh in which all that are in the tombs shall hear His voice" (that of the Son of God), "and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and that that have done ill, unto the resurrection of judgment." Of this final resurrection and judgment we could not have a more fit representation than that here given. "The great white throne" is most expressive of the vastness of the multitude to be judged, and of the greatness and justice of Him whose judgment-seat it is.

Here we place the real Second Advent of Jesus Christ. Elsewhere He is clearly declared to be the final and universal Judge. But this does not the less prove that the judgment is that of the Eternal God and universal King. Just as Jesus is said to sit down on His Father's throne in heaven, whence both Father and Son conduct the government of the universe,—a throne which is still His Father's—so here the judgment-throne is that of the Father and remains that of the Father, whilst at the same time that of the Son. From the place occupied by the Father throughout this Book, nothing would seem more fit than that the Father rather than the Son should here appear as the Judge of all, however true it is that (John v. 22, 23) "Neither doth the Father judge any man, but He hath given all judgment unto the Son; that all may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father,"—words which clearly imply that when the Father is here represented as judging, the Son has come, come the second time, come to judge the whole world, as He represents Himself as doing, Matt. xxv. 31-46, "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then shall He sit on the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered *all nations*: and He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd

separateth the sheep from the goats : and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, and the goats on His left. . . And these shall go away into eternal punishment : but the righteous into eternal life." The vision, it has been argued, of the Rider on the white horse with many diadems on His head, is that of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, or that, if not, we have no vision of that Advent at all. Keeping in view that the final Judgment is that of the Son as appointed by the Father, and that the representation of the Father's judgment is in fact that of the Son, and so implies His second coming, we must view this very vision as that which is said to be wanting ; and a vastly more appropriate vision of it, however only implied, than that which is held to be the only one—than that, in fact, which represents Christ as coming to fight and to subdue His pre-millennial enemies alone, and not His post-millennial foes, but not as coming, as is again and again declared throughout the New Testament, to judge all mankind, friends and foes alike. Here we may note three things of importance in the interpretation of this chapter :—

First. The final and universal Judgment is not to be placed as matter of prophecy not to be well known till the time of fulfilment comes. So far this is the case ; but it is rather to be regarded as an appointed and necessary part of the government of the world, with which it is intended that all men should be made familiar, as it is intended that all the subjects of every kingdom should be acquainted with the fact and with the nature of its courts of justice. We are not, therefore, to seek for the needful knowledge in any symbolic or figurative prophecy, but in the plain and express declarations of Scripture. The prophecy we are to interpret by such plain and express announcements, and not the announcements by the prophecy ; though, of course, the light of both combined will be clearer than that of either by itself. We do not need this most sublime and awful vision to reveal to us the great day of Judgment, though we may see its unspeakable value as setting forth that great day in a way wonderfully fitted to awaken the minds and consciences and hearts of men, and thus to lead all so to live as to be prepared to meet the impartially righteous Judge on that "great white throne."

Secondly. So we ought to do in the case of the preceding vision of the millennial reign. However true it is that revelation is progressive, we must not conclude from this that the last of a series of prophecies or disclosures of any kind must of itself, or because it is the last, be the clearest and most intelligible of all. Taken by

itself it might be the reverse, even the obscurest and least intelligible of all—requiring the combined light of all for its true interpretation; and, when thus interpreted, completing all and making all one grand and perfect whole. So it is in the case of the grand millennial vision of this chapter. Viewed exclusively, we venture to say it could not fail greatly to mislead all without exception who would attempt to understand it. Contemplated in the full light of the glorious and harmonious system of Divine promise as well as of Divine prophecy—in fact, of the whole progressive revelation of the Old and New Testament Scriptures, it need mislead no one, but combine with all the rest to give the most wonderful and most comprehensible conception of the future and glorious kingdom of Christ on earth, and thus to suggest what we cannot possibly comprehend, even the vastness, the glory, and the blessedness of that kingdom in heaven. Some have wondered how so little is said in the New Testament, and even by Christ Himself, concerning the universal prosperity of His kingdom before His Second Advent. The reason is very simple, and, we think, sufficient,—that the prophets had so fully and gloriously spoken of it before, that there was no real need for such teaching as is thus desiderated. But, just as the first promise contains all in one sentence, Christ has put all in another form, yet in only one sentence,—the contest between Satan and Himself being fully expressed in both,—“Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out: and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself.”

Thirdly. We do well to observe the order in which this vision occurs: after that of the millennial reign of the saints, and before that of the new heavens, new earth, new Jerusalem. This intermediate place is very appropriate. That of the risen saints coincides so far, and only so far, with that of the New Jerusalem. In so far as both include the Millennium, they fully coincide. But, in so far as that of the New Jerusalem refers to the eternal world, they do not at least appear so to coincide. Thus we are not told of what “the beloved city” becomes, or whether it exists for ever; whereas we think it can be fully proved that the New Jerusalem is symbolic of the Church of Christ or of the kingdom of heaven, both on earth and in heaven. As this is the case, it was well to set forth the last and universal Judgment before representing the Church of Christ or kingdom of heaven in the double aspect referred to, as at once on earth and in heaven. That the New Jerusalem exists on earth before the close of the Millennium is clear from the reference to “the

beloved city" as assailed by the last enemies of the Church on earth; and that this final Judgment takes place after the creation of the new heavens and new earth of the next chapter, is evident from the allusion to the removal of the old heavens and old earth in the words of which we are about to treat. We repeat, then, no better place could be found for this vision of the Judgment, than that which it occupies, and which provided for the representation of the Church on earth and in heaven as one glorious and eternal Church or kingdom in time and to eternity.

(2) "*From whose face the earth and the heaven fled away: and there was found no place for them.*" We have no previous notice of this. It might be inferred that such was in some sense the result of His taking His place on His awful throne; as if the material earth and heavens were then and thus made to pass away. However, just as the "beloved city" is spoken of in this chapter before it is said to come down from heaven in the next, so "the first heaven and the first earth," spoken of in the next as "passed away," are here said to have "fled away" from before "the face" of the Judge; "and there was found no place for them." That these were not the material heavens and earth, but the old heavens and old earth forming the kingdom of Satan on earth, or the world of mankind apart from Christ, and before being converted to God, will more fully appear when we treat of the next chapter. The idea, then, is that the Judge thus appeared after the redemptive work on earth was ended, and after the vast change had been effected, by which Christ had brought back mankind to God, or by which God swept away the old heavens and earth of the kingdom of Satan and substituted for them the new heavens and earth of His own eternal kingdom.

(3) "*And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened, and another book was opened, which is (the Book) of Life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.*" It has been said, If the former visions must be taken symbolically, why should we take this literally? To a great extent this vision is symbolic. The great white throne is so. The universal gathering of the dead before this throne is the same. The books are specially so; and so is the Book of Life. The same may be said of death and Hades. But though thus symbolical, a vast

and awful and yet glorious reality underlies the whole, or is represented by the whole. We may put the matter thus: that the great Judgment, which may take place in no one day, but during a lengthened period, shall be conducted, not in form, but in effect, as thus symbolically and most sublimely set forth. All the human race, whatever the time or manner of judgment, will be treated in the great future according as they have lived on earth. The turning-point will be that of their treatment of Christ, their reception or rejection of Him and His salvation. The universality of the gathering is vividly set forth by what is said of the sea, of death, and of Hades, of every region giving up all within them. Hades being simply the place of the departed, souls as well as bodies are thus represented as reunited, and thus as rising from the dead. The real nature of the resurrection we cannot understand: we must simply accept it as a fact of Divine revelation. All were judged according to the facts of their history, so far recorded in the memory of every individual, and perfectly and unerringly recorded in the mind of the great Judge.

At the same time, and in one important sense, the Judgment may be said to go on from beginning to end of every man's life, and from age to age of the world. By the laws of every one's nature, physical and spiritual, the actions and conduct of this life prepare him for his place, good or evil, in the world to come. The books remind us of the procedure of our earthly courts. "The Book of Life" has been alluded to again and again in this Book. It may be viewed as corresponding to a register of births within any city or kingdom,—of those born again, born from above, born in Zion or Jerusalem, born through union to Christ into the kingdom of heaven. The presence of this Book of Life clearly proves that the children of God as well as the children of the wicked one, the followers of Christ as well as those who would not have Him to reign over them, the righteous as well as the wicked, were all gathered together here. If the righteous dead had been, by a previous resurrection, separated from the whole of the wicked dead, there would have been need of no Book of Life. The time to use it would have been that at which it was determined to raise all whose names were written within. "All were judged every man according to their works."

(4) "*And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, (even) the lake of fire.*" Death and Hades are here personified, as under the fourth seal. Here they are viewed as entirely and for ever destroyed. The lake of fire is thus set forth as the great medium of final destruction,—the destroyer

of all personified evil, as thus just referred to, and the destroyer of all evil personalities, whether by destroying their very being or by destroying their happiness or creating their misery. It is called the second death. It is the cause of that death or destruction. We need not say that all is presented in a highly figurative as well as most awful form. Nor need we add that much evil has come from the use of the words in an actually literal sense. We do not require so to do in order now to present the punishment of the impenitent in the most terrible light. Still, it is to be feared that we do not gather from these terrible material representations what was and is really intended by them, even the most overwhelming sense of "the exceeding sinfulness of sin," and of the exceeding greatness of its punishment or simply of its consequences.

(5) "*And if any one was not found written in the Book of Life, he was cast into the lake of fire.*" The twice-born children of God and the impenitent rejecters of salvation are here distinguished. As already said, this Book of Life, here represented as thus made use of, clearly proves the presence of good and evil alike. Not only so, but the form of words employed suggests the most cheering view that we can take of the great future, the view which we have given of the vast period of the mystic Millennium, and of the vastly greater number of the saved than of the unsaved suggested by so long a period,—we mean the words, "If any was not found written in the Book," seemingly implying that those not so written were the exceptions rather than the contrary, or that the great majority of the judged were actually the redeemed and saved. This may seem a minute criticism. Be it so: it is at least a hopeful and cheering one, and proceeding on the principle that, if the length of the millennial period fairly suggests the idea of such a majority, the mode of expression here used was just the most natural to be so. All this sets before the thoughtful mind at once the infinite grandeur and infinite awfulness of that future which we find here represented by this great vision. Well may it prompt every mind to inquire concerning the unspeakably important point of the new and glorious birth of which Jesus spoke so solemnly—"Except a man be born again he cannot enter the kingdom of God," whether on earth or in heaven. How shall we most assuredly know whether our names are written in this "the Lamb's Book of Life"? Simply by asking whether the name of the Lamb is written in our own heart of hearts as the most precious and dearest of all in heaven or on earth. And how can we get

that great name, including the name of His Father and our Father, so written? Also most simply, by receiving that blessed Redeemer into our sincere and loving hearts, as the free and unmerited gift of God, freely and fully presented to us in the word of God and by the grace of the Spirit of God. "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish in the way. . . . Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him."

IX.

CHAPTERS XXI., XXII.

THE NEW HEAVEN AND THE NEW EARTH, AND THE NEW JERUSALEM, OR THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST, BOTH MILLENNIAL AND ETERNAL.

THESE two chapters form one complete and indivisible whole. They have been injured by separation. In them we have the last and most glorious vision of the apostolic prophet and witness, John, in which the grand issue of all the agencies, Divine, human, and Satanic, is presented to his inspired mind. Often it is regarded as a vision of the Christian Church in its celestial and eternal state of glory and blessedness. By some it is viewed as a representation of the millennial reign of Christ with His saints literally raised from the dead. Nor have others failed to see in it a reference to the conversion and special exaltation of the Jewish nation to dwell in their restored and beautified capital, with their long-rejected Messiah as their King, literally seated on the throne of His father, David. In coming to one or other of these varied conclusions, interpreters seem to have made use of one or other of the prophetic representations of the glorious future, millennial and eternal, as if each separate prediction could refer to only one grand event, or to only one special aspect of the Church of Christ or kingdom of the true Israel of God. We need not say that nothing is more certain than this—that the ancient prophecies contained at least a double reference, *first* to the literal or typical king and kingdom, and *next* to the spiritual or typified, King and kingdom of Israel. So especially the 2nd, 45th, 72nd, and 110th Psalms. Only as time advanced did this double reference clearly reveal itself. So, too, we find in the case of Christ's prophecy at once of the judicial treatment of the Jewish nation, and of that of mankind at large. We need not, then, wonder to find in these two closing chapters a vision of the

millennial and of the eternal state of the redeemed viewed as really one and the same state.

As we have been led to observe again and again, the kingdom of heaven is one and the same kingdom, with certainly one and the same King and one and the same class of twice-born subjects, whether on earth or in heaven. In this last vision of that kingdom, earth and heaven unite, time and eternity blend together, and all appears in keeping with what we find expressly said, Heb. xii. 22-8, "Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than (that of) Abel. . . . Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." Here the earthly and the heavenly, as we have said, appear as forming one and the same kingdom which cannot be moved. The like unity is set forth in this vision, only the millennial is specially presented to view, and yet so presented that we cannot but see that the eternal is also implied. In fact, it seems absolutely impossible to interpret these chapters of this world alone or of heaven alone, or on any principle but that of the millennial and eternal reign of Christ as really one and undivided. This will, we think, clearly appear as we advance. Accordingly, in treating of "the new heaven and the new earth," with "the new Jerusalem," we must keep up the idea of the essential unity to which we have referred, and at the same time be careful to avoid all narrow conception of the double or even manifold meaning of Old Testament prophecy.

I.

CHAPTER XXI.

1. *Ver. 1.* "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more."

We may here put our remarks under the following heads:—

(1) The context clearly shows what is intended by "the new heaven and the new earth," at least under their immediate or millennial aspect. Just because this vision follows that of the final Judgment, some have inferred that it must relate to the eternal

world alone. So Alford. However, this is a very great mistake. It cannot well be doubted that the "beloved city" of the preceding chapter, the capital of the Israel of the Millennium, is none else than "the New Jerusalem," here set forth as "coming down out of heaven from God." The very fact of its thus coming down demonstrates the correctness of this. Again, the bride of chap. xix. 7-9 and the bride of this chapter are certainly the same; both alike being said to be "made ready adorned for her husband." In fact, "the new heaven and the new earth" correspond exactly with "the first resurrection." Both modes of expression are borrowed from the ordinary and literal expressions, general resurrection, and "new heaven and new earth" of the world to come, and to which 2 Peter iii. 1-13 refers. If we are to take the first resurrection and visible presence of Christ literally, then these new heavens and earth must be taken literally also, and thus identified, as sometimes they actually are, with those of Peter just alluded to. If, again, we take that resurrection symbolically, as we are assured we ought, then "the new heaven and the new earth" should be taken symbolically also. This we hold to be the correct and only defensible view of this vision. In this way we see what is meant by the words relating to the final Judgment, chap. xx. 11: "And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat upon it, from whose face the heaven and the earth fled away; and there was found no place for them." In these words, as in those relating to "the beloved city," we seem to have a reference to "the first heaven and first earth" here said to have "passed away"; "the new heaven and new earth," of which we treat, taking their place. In referring to the great Judge, about to deal judicially with all men, it was natural to allude to the great redemptive work which He had previously effected. But, if this be doubted, then the reference, like that of Peter, will be to the literal heaven and earth of which our world is framed. However, considering the way in which the vision of this chapter is connected with that of the Millennium, with its reference to "the New Jerusalem" as "the beloved city," we seem to have pretty strong reason for regarding the flight and the passing away of "the heavens and earth" as the same.

(2) It may be well to notice separately the prophecy or promise of "a new heaven and a new earth" which seems here as well as in 2 Peter to be referred to,—Isaiah lxi. 17-25, "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever (in that) which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing,

and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant, nor an old man that hath not filled his days. . . . For as the days of a tree (are) the days of My people, and Mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands . . . they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them. . . . The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust (shall be) the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, saith the Lord."

Of these words, containing the prophecy or promise referred to, we think it may without doubt be justly said, *First*, that they relate to the millennial period of which we treat. We have, as here, "a new heaven, a new earth," and virtually, though not verbally, "a New Jerusalem,"—in fact, the three main objects of this vision. *Secondly*, The people will be blessed with great length of days; but generation is to follow generation throughout the period referred to, and therefore to the same period as in the vision of the Millennium. *Thirdly*, They would labour and live as in previous times, building houses, planting vineyards, having children that shall be blessed with themselves and that shall not cause trouble. *Fourthly*, whilst they would thus resemble the living of every age, "marrying and giving in marriage," and not "the children of the resurrection," whom pre-millennialists suppose, we are told that "the voice of weeping shall be no more heard, nor the voice of crying," just as here in verse 4; implying that the language of comparison is used both in Isaiah and in John. *Fifthly*, This promise is just a repetition of the more extended prophecy of Isaiah xi. 1-9, which is not only very grand in itself, but truly millennial in its whole character. Hence the words introduced from that chapter—"The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust (shall be) the serpent's meat,"—virtually the same, though figuratively expressed, as the millennial degradation and imprisonment of this same old serpent. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain,"—implying the universality and not merely Israelitish reference of the promise, as is seen by what is added in chap. xi. as the true and glorious cause of this grand transformation and perfect peace, "for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Such we take to be the true Millennium at once of Isaiah, of John, and of all the prophets. The same expression is used in Isaiah lxvi. 22, "For as the new heavens and

the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before Me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain." Here we have the same millennial new creation, implying the same people from generation to generation. But we seem to find in this passage what we did not find in the other—namely, that the new creation was destined to "remain before Jehovah," seemingly for ever and ever: in fact, the very kingdom which, as we have already referred to, "cannot be shaken," but which, when all other things shall be so shaken as to be completely removed, shall, as here said, "remain."

Thus we seem clearly to obtain, from these two passages, these three thoughts: *first*, that of a millennial reign of grace over the Israel of God, over converted descendants of Abraham and converted nations of the world, all experiencing from age to age the new-creating power of that grace; *secondly*, that of the eternal reign of glory; and *thirdly*, that of the unity of these two reigns, or that of the unbroken continuity of the terrestrial and millennial kingdom of grace as it rises and issues into the celestial and eternal kingdom of glory. This may seem to put more into the words than they can be shown to contain. For our present purpose, it is enough to show that they are fairly capable of expressing all this, and that they appear at least to express it. By-and-by we shall find apostolic authority for interpreting them as we have done. In the meantime we may allude to the third and only other passage in Isaiah in which a verbal reference is made to these "new heavens and new earth"—chap. li. 16. After encouraging His oppressed and desponding people by reminding them of His abundant power to save, in that He had created the natural heavens and earth, which would yet "vanish away like smoke," He again refers to the same fact, vers. 12, 13, "I, even I, am He that comforteth you: who art thou," thus protected by Me, "that thou art afraid of man that shall die . . . and hast forgotten the Lord, thy Maker, that stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and fearest continually . . . the fury of the oppressor? . . . I am the Lord thy God, which stilleth the sea when the waves thereof roar: Jehovah of hosts is His name." Then follow the words to which we refer, "And I have put My words in thy mouth, and have covered thee in the shadow of Mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art My people." Thus, we may safely say, the grand work of redemption is that of "planting the new heavens," and "laying the foundations of the new earth," and of

creating a new people to Himself, a people unlike those whom they ought not to fear, even "men that shall die." All three passages point to the same glorious future, the same millennial and eternal kingdom, as one and the same, but clearly distinguished as well as identified in the vision of John.

(3) We may now see how the two New Testament passages, which have been too often misunderstood, may be harmonised and seen to set forth the whole truth.

a. The passage before us, in which we are told of the millennial heaven and earth. The very same we have found clearly set forth by Isaiah. Nay, whilst in John the description is so grand as to suggest the eternal rather than the millennial state of the Church, and in Isaiah the description is so much that of Israel from age to age as to suggest the millennial rather than the eternal, both apostle and prophet agree in evidently including both;—John describing the New Jerusalem as evidently on earth as well as in heaven, and Isaiah using words as strong as those of John, and suggesting that he refers to heaven as well as to earth: "the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying," words which equal in force, but not in tenderness, those which, above all others, suggest the heavenly state of the Church, "And He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more: the first things are passed away." Both, then, use words comparatively true of earth, absolutely true of heaven. The allusion to death is no exception, as it is said to be abolished in the case of all Christians on earth as well as in heaven.

b. The important and apparently inconsistent passage in 2 Peter iii. 3-13, "In the last days mockers shall come . . . saying, Where is the promise of His coming? . . . They wilfully forget . . . that the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens that now are, and the earth, have been stored up for fire, (or with fire) being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. . . . But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in (all) holy living and godliness, looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? But,

according to His promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

On these words we may observe: *First*, "The last times" may refer to the whole of the Christian or last dispensation, from beginning to end, and thus to either pre-millennial or post-millennial times. *Secondly*, The mockers referred to doubtless point to the grand promise of the Second Coming of Christ, which forms the basis of the glorious and eternal hope of Christians. *Thirdly*, The apostle assures us that the present and literal heavens and earth are stored up for or with fire, and reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men, and therefore to the very close of time or the time of universal Judgment. The Millennium, therefore, will have ended, and the time of final apostasy closed, before the terrible catastrophe can take place; implying that the last times include even the time of that post-millennial falling away. *Fourthly*, Then "The day of the Lord will come as a thief," suddenly and unexpectedly, "in the which the heavens shall pass away . . . and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up;" that is to say, the real great day of the Lord will be post-millennial, and at the time of the judgment and destruction of ungodly men. Then shall, according to the above, this our world, heaven and earth, be literally destroyed. *Fifthly*, This awful day, we are told, Christians are to look for and earnestly desire, not assuredly because it is "the great day of wrath," but rather because it is the glorious day of perfect and eternal redemption, "the consummation of all things," the beginning of the most glorious, heavenly and eternal state of the full complement of the redeemed of all the earth and of all time: or, as is added, "But, according to His promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." *Sixthly*, Peter is thus led to say nothing as to the symbolic "first resurrection," or as to the like symbolic "new heaven and new earth," but to speak exclusively of the literal Judgment, the literal destruction of this world, and the literal heavenly and eternal world. the literal "new heavens and new earth" of the whole Bible, wherein only the righteous, or all the truly redeemed, shall dwell with Christ and with God for ever and ever. *Seventhly*, The apostle has thus been led to set forth the one aspect of this twofold promise, the aspect of it as relating to the literal earth of mankind and the literal heaven of the saved; and so he brings us down to the real close of time, the real Second Coming of Christ, and the real hope of the saved, the real and perfected and eternal constitution of

the heavenly world. *Eighthly*, The Apocalyptist, again, has a vision setting forth to him, and through him to us, not the other aspect of the same twofold promise alone, but really both aspects of it,—mainly that relating to that of the millennial symbolic “new heaven and new earth,” yet inclusively that also of “the new heaven and new earth” of the literal world to come.

(4) We are now prepared to consider the contrast here drawn between the “new heaven and new earth” seen by John and “the first heaven and the first earth,” which, he says, “are passed away.” From the preceding context, and from what we have just seen, our literal heaven and earth cannot possibly be meant. They are reserved for the time of final judgment and destruction of ungodly men, which all admit to follow the millennial times. The mighty change, then, here referred to, will be consummated only after the imprisonment of Satan and the deliverance of mankind from his delusive power. When this time has come, “the new heaven and the new earth” will have been established, the Millennium fully begun, and “the first heaven and the first earth passed away.” What, then, are we to understand by this first or old heaven and this first or old earth which will thus have ceased to be? Not only this Book, but the whole Bible, clearly shows. From the beginning up to the time here alluded to, this world has been more or less under the reign of Satan and of sin. Christ Himself expressly called him “the prince of this world.” John as expressly says, 1 Epist. v. 19, “We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the evil one.” From that reign the world has been said to be delivered. Satan has been cast out of the heaven of false religion through the triumphant entrance of the true. He has been cast out of the earth of antichristian persecution and misrule. He has been cast out of both the heaven and earth of spiritual and moral deception. His old kingdom has been destroyed. It has become the kingdom of Christ. The old heaven of false religion has passed away; and the new heaven of true religion has taken its place. The old earth of unjust despotic power, of endless lawlessness and strife, of war and suffering, of disorder and confusion, has also passed away; and the new earth of righteousness and peace, of order and prosperity, of benevolence and humanity, of universal brotherhood and perfect liberty, has risen instead. The old heaven and the old earth of Godless, Christless, spiritually dead and morally perverted mankind, have passed away; and the new heaven and the new earth of regenerated, sanctified, God-fearing, Christ-loving, and mutually loving and helping mankind, have taken their place.

The change is vast. How vast the difference between a Godless and Christless, and a Godly and Christlike man, or family, or neighbourhood, or village, or town, or city, or nation! How vast, then, the difference between a Godless and Christless, and a Godly and Christlike world! We do not now suppose a world of perfect goodness or of sinless perfection, such as shall be found in heaven alone. We need not suppose a higher excellence than that which distinguishes many a Christian of the present day. We have only to suppose the gospel triumphant in all hearts, and the great inspiring and guiding power of all lives. We have only to suppose the words, which we have already quoted, truly fulfilled, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea." The first or old world shall have passed away. A new-created world, a world of which it may be said, "Old things are passed away; behold, they are become new," will have followed. The home of man on earth will thus wonderfully resemble that in heaven. The millennial blessedness and glory will be a fit and happy prelude to the glory and blessedness of eternity; and the unity of both will, by all who anticipate this, be seen to be finely represented by the wonderful description here given of "the New Jerusalem." Some would suppose a special reference to the conversion of the Jews and the rebuilding and heightened glory of Jerusalem. Doubtless that conversion is implied. But that the Jews should rise to any national superiority over other peoples, we deem not only incorrect, but most unscriptural and thoroughly antichristian; whilst the idea of any material city as the capital of this new world is inconsistent with the spirit of this whole Book and of the entire Bible.

So far as the Jews are concerned, the view of some is far more worthy of consideration, that the first heaven and first earth relate to Israel under the first or old covenant, and that the new heaven and the new earth are those of the true and universal Israel under the new and everlasting covenant. This might have commended itself, and accounted for the use of the term *New*, both here and as applied to the Jerusalem of this chapter. However, this whole Book treats of the Israel of God at large on the one hand, and of mankind at large under Satan and sin on the other; and so sets aside all such limitation. When the fallen world under Satan has become the true Israel under Christ and God, this vision of John shall be realised. We should not forget that we alter even the material house when we change the inhabitant. Convert the unconverted family—say, let all, from godlessness and intemperance,

become temperate and godly—and the very house will be as if altogether new. So this very world of ours is even now undergoing a process of most wonderful transformation, not only, as we are accustomed to speak of, by the progress of human art and science, but vastly more so by the progress of the gospel and the advancing regeneration of the human race. To the eye which sees God everywhere, the very sun is a totally different object from what it was to the same eye when it could see God nowhere. Given a new or renewed race, and you get a new or renewed home, even “a new heaven and a new earth.”

(5) “*And the sea is no more.*” These words might well convince all of the symbolical character of this vision of John. Taken literally, they have suggested all sorts of ideas, of which some have been strange and even ridiculous. If viewed in relation to this world, unless its constitution were entirely altered and fitted for the immortal alone, instead of a blessing, this would be the greatest calamity. It would simply mean universal death. If viewed in relation to the next, the words would be simply needless. We require no such information as to the totally unknown and unrevealed physical constitution of the heavenly and eternal world. The real meaning seems clear, when we study the words in the light of the earlier visions of this Book, and of the great vision of Daniel. The wild beasts of both are said to rise out of the sea. In this case, the sea seems justly taken for society, or for people viewed as in a state of agitation, disorganisation, contention, war; the solid earth, however godless, being regarded as the dwelling-place of nations or of mankind in a state of stable civil and political government. When “the new heavens and the new earth” of Divine light, Divine order, Divine government, Divine power and harmony, are established, there will then assuredly be no more sea of discord and the like. If any will hold by a reference to the material ocean, then they may surely be content to infer, that there will be no such sea as John and many of his contemporaries were wont to regard it, even as a source of danger and separation and manifold evil, but as changed into the very highway of communication between nations, a source of the greatest wealth and pleasure to mankind. However, the view above given is, we are fully persuaded, the only natural and simple one, the only one suitable to the context, in keeping with the visions above referred to, and commending itself to the mind.

2. *Ver. 2.* “And I saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.”

We have already so far indicated our view of this Holy City, concerning which marked difference of opinion has long obtained. Before further treating of it, it may perhaps be well to note the following.—Alford: "As in our common discourse, so here with the Evangelist, the name of the material city stands for the community formed by its inhabitants. But it does not follow in his case, any more than in ours, that both material city and inhabitants have not a veritable existence: nor can we say that the glorious description of *it*, presently to follow, applies only to *them*." Here it certainly applies to them, or rather to the whole Israel of God, who alone can form the bride, and who may be said, in some high, yet simple sense, to come down from God; whilst it may be most inapplicable to any material city, which, in no real sense, can well be supposed to come down out of heaven, especially in any real way after the form of the actual description.—Webster and Wilkinson: "It is clear from vers. 7, 8, 27, xxii. 14, 15, that the state of bliss described in this concluding vision is coeval with the punishment of the wicked described in xx. 15; and equally clear from ver. 4 that it is the state of perfect and eternal bliss."

This seems very exact and convincing. However, it proceeds on the oversight of two things: *First*, That the vision of the general Judgment, however placed before that of this chapter, is so placed there because it deals with the literally last day, whereas this has to do with both millennial and eternal blessedness as one uninterrupted whole, as we shall, we think, assuredly find. If the vision of final Judgment had followed that of the New Jerusalem, it would have naturally suggested that that city was millennial alone, and that we really had no reference to the eternal state at all. If this be kept in view, the verses referred to will be seen to harmonise with chap. xx. 15, and with the whole vision of Judgment. *Secondly*, It is overlooked that, whilst much is said in both chapters proving that both the millennial and the eternal kingdoms are meant, the very strongest language may be used as *comparatively* true of the one, as it can be used as *absolutely* true only of the other. "With reference to those who understand it of the Millennium," Mr. Gipps well remarks (p. 17), "I never can conceive that the Holy Ghost has given such numerous and glorious descriptions concerning the state of the saints during the period of a thousand years, and has left the infinitely more important eternity which follows wrapt up in darkness." This may seem very strong. However, our view that both the mystic thousand years and the infinitely more important eternity, are alike included in this vision of the Holy City, completely

removes the objection, unless in the case of those who suppose the reference to the Millennium alone. Nor should this double reference be objected to, seeing the very promise or prophecy of Isaiah here alluded to has most certainly the very same double reference to the same things, the promise of undoubtedly the earthly prosperity of Israel, and the promise of "the new heavens and new earth" of the apostle Peter, which can only be interpreted of the eternal world. Further, even though it were true that a glorious vision of the thousand years is here given, and no vision at all given of the vast eternity which follows but merely such references to it as we find in those three closing chapters, we think there would simply be no room for his remark as to the Holy Spirit, as the grand and almost entire end of this symbolic Book is to set forth the terrestrial history of the Church militant rather than to give a glorious description of the celestial blessedness of the Church triumphant. The real nature of the blessedness and glory of the righteous has been revealed elsewhere, and in less mystical form, throughout the Sacred Scriptures. The Holy Spirit has done this in His own proper place and perfect way.

Bengel says: "It is not without reason that John always writes in his Gospel *Ἱεροσόλυμα*, of the old city; and in the Apocalypse always *Ἱερουσαλήμ*, of the heavenly city. *Ἱερουσαλήμ* is a Hebrew name, the original and more holy one: *Ἱεροσόλυμα*, afterwards in ordinary use, is a Greek name, and rather used in a political sense. St. Paul observes the same difference, when refuting Judaism, Gal. iv. 26 (comp. the same Epistle i. 17, 18, and ii. 1); Heb. xii. 22, although at other times he uses them indiscriminately, and says to the Romans and Corinthians, for the sake of *σεμνότητος* [*dignity*], and to win their favour, *Ἱερουσαλήμ* . . . The new city has no connection with the Millennium . . . but it belongs to the state of perfect renovation and eternity, as is shown by the series of visions, the magnificence of the description, and the opposition to the second death." Like others, Bengel fails to mark the double reference, and the comparative and absolute force of the words. Elliott: "We have seen that *Augustine* explained this glorified Jerusalem of Old Testament prophecy as identical with the Apocalyptic New Jerusalem, and both the one and the other as simply *symbols* of the *heavenly and everlasting blessedness of the risen saints*: that on the other hand *Whitley and Vitringa*, while also identifying the two figurations, did yet explain them to signify, alike the one and the other, the *millennial earthly blessedness of the Christian Church*: and

that Mr. Faber would separate the two, and make the *Old Testament Jerusalem* of the latter day *alone* millennial. To which I may add, that some expositors, while explaining one or both to predict *earthly* glories destined for God's people, make the *restored* and *converted Jews* nationally, not the *Church Catholic* generally, the grand object and chief intended recipients of the coming glory. So does the great question about the *Jews' restoration* intermix itself with that respecting the New Jerusalem; and force upon us at this point the consideration of the *Jewish people's* destiny in the coming future. . . . And the only question for the Apocalyptic expositor is, where to place them in his scheme of unfulfilled prophecy; and how to associate the blessedness of *Israel's national restoration* with, or how dissociate it from, the predicted glories of the Millennium and of the New Jerusalem. Now, that we are *to identify* the restored *Jewish people* with the constituency of the *Apocalyptic New Jerusalem*, or *their* restored earthly and holy city with *that* Holy City, appears to me perfectly clear."

The question of the destiny of the Jewish people seems to belong to the expositor of other parts of Scripture, and not at all to the expositor of the Apocalypse, throughout which the whole Church or kingdom of Christ is represented under the name, and is made up, of the Israel of God. By introducing the question of the Jewish nation, the greatest confusion could hardly have been possibly avoided. Paul has treated briefly, but comprehensively and sufficiently, of that question, "according to the wisdom given unto him"; and we can see the perfect wisdom by which all reference to it should be excluded from this Book. Paul has expressly said, Rom. xi. 25-7, "I would not, brethren, have you ignorant of this mystery, lest ye be wise in your own conceits, that a hardening in part hath befallen Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in; and so all Israel shall be saved: even as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer; He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: and this is My covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins." Whether before or at the millennial period, we are here expressly told that all Israel will be converted to the true Messiah, "when the fulness of the Gentiles" comes. Then they shall accordingly become a part of the true Israel of God, the true Church or kingdom of Jesus Christ. There was thus not the least need to refer to their conversion in this Book. It is implied in the conversion of the whole world. The very question, suggested as the main one by Elliott, would never so much as occur to any

one who, instead of erroneously identifying or in some way literally connecting, with the earthly and material Jerusalem, the Jerusalem which represents the whole Israel of God, and is no material or local or literal city at all, correctly and clearly saw that the ineffably glorious city of this vision and of the New Testament symbolised the one entire and undivided "kingdom of heaven," in time and in eternity, or in its twofold form, yet perfectly unbroken continuity, of most prosperous state on earth and of perfect blessedness and glory in heaven. So much for the views of the above. We shall arrange our own observations as under :—

(1) "*The Holy City, the New Jerusalem.*" Not "*the great city*": this is the name of Babylon the great. Greatness, the ambition of all men, of all fallen selfish beings, human or angelic, is too much the aspiration of Christians. Even the apostles contended for greatness. Holiness, goodness, excellence, the grand desire of the true children of God, of all the true Israel, and just in proportion as they are one with Christ and with God, or belong to this Holy City. This Holy City existed long before the time to which this vision points. In chap xi. 1, 2, it is thus referred to, "And there was given to me a reed like unto a rod: and one said, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. And the court which is without the temple leave without, and measure it not: for it hath been given to the nations: and the Holy City shall they tread under foot forty and two months." Such was the symbolic description of the Christian Church destined to be perverted and paganised, or to be turned once more into an empire of unconverted peoples, "nations" or Gentiles. These are to occupy the Holy City, in reality to convert it into the great and unholy Babylon of the nations. This state of things was to continue forty-two months, usually counted 1260 literal years. Be this as it may, during that period the Holy City of God was to become the unholy city of man, and, whilst called Babylon by the true inhabitants, proudly to retain the forfeited name of "The Holy City." The mystic forty-two months have passed away. The mystic Babylon has ceased to be. The antichristian and really heathen Church has perished. The multitudes that trod the hallowed place can no longer be seen within those walls which are true salvation or those gates which are Divine and heavenly praise. The Holy City now reappears,—appears in more than primitive beauty and loveliness, more truly than ever the joy and the praise of the whole earth. There has thus been a glorious revival, and that called by the mystic name of The First Resur-

rection. These nations, which so long trod the Holy City, are all dead, and shall have no living successors "till the thousand years are ended." Those represented by the measured temple and altar have risen into new divine and heavenly life, destined to live on from age to age during the mystic Millennium. They occupy the Holy City. The risen saints of the preceding chapter are symbolised by the Holy City of this. The Holy City of this is symbolised by the risen saints of that. Both represent the revived or restored Church of Jesus Christ. "The New Jerusalem" is just the one to which we have referred as trodden down by the nations, but not possessed by the true Israel of God. "If so," it may be asked, "why should it be said to come down from heaven, and yet to rise up as if out of the grave?"

(2) In answer, we reply that, in the latter case, the Church of Christ is said to rise, because it had been persecuted, and virtually put to death and buried by the powers of Antichrist, and afterwards delivered and raised to more than original life and power. Hence the symbolic resurrection. But why should the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, be said to come down out of heaven from God? Many take this literally, and even materially. But if the city symbolise the community, as it most certainly does, and is thus the bride, then in some sense the community must come down from heaven. Whether literally or symbolically? Certainly not literally, but symbolically. If literally, as many think, then the dead saints must first rise from their tombs; and, instead of remaining on earth, where they are supposed to live and reign a thousand years, they must first ascend to heaven, and then come down again, and that not to reign immediately after their descent, but to engage, under the leadership of the many-diademed Warrior-King, in the great and final war with the beast, or Antichrist, and his great armies, immortals with mortals; and then, and only then, to appear as the united and glorified kingdom, living and reigning on earth for a thousand years,—but whether, after a new antichristian rising, to ascend once more to heaven, whence they came, and there to be formed into another and eternal kingdom, this Book or rather this closing vision, does not in the least reveal. The very supposition of such a literal descent, with all thus implied, may well demonstrate its own absolute fallacy.

In what sense, then, does the Holy City, or do those represented by it, come down out of heaven? The words which follow furnish the simple and all-sufficient answer,—“from God,”—words which point to the real and Divine origin of the Holy City or the heavenly

community. We have more than once set forth the true idea before. Christ Himself, in the Gospel of John, clearly explains all. He said of the unconverted rejecters of His gospel, chap. viii. 23, "Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world." To be of this world, then, is to be from beneath, or from Satan. To be from above, or heaven, and from God is not to be of this world. Again, let us mark what He says of His disciples, chap. xvii. 11, 14, 16, "Holy Father, keep them in Thy name whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, even as We (are). . . . I have given them Thy word; and the world hated them, because they are not of the world, and even as I am not of the world. . . . (the same repeated) They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." *First*, they are from God, the Holy Father, and therefore from heaven, or from above, as Christ says of Himself; and, *secondly*, they are *on* earth and yet not *of* earth, as Christ was *on* earth, and yet not *of* earth, but both from heaven and of God, as He thus says all His disciples are, and therefore, as are all here seen in vision, symbolically, not literally coming down out of heaven from God in the emblematic form of "the Holy City, the New Jerusalem." All this is in perfect harmony with the symbolic allusion to the great antagonist of Christ, the beast of the seventeenth chapter—"The beast that thou sawest was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss, and to go into perdition"; the idea of real origin being thus expressed: that is to say, Antichrist and his followers came up from the abode of Satan, or came from Satan himself, as Christ and His people came from the abode of God or from God Himself, or as all Christians born from above, born of a new, Divine and heavenly birth, "came down out of heaven from God."

(3) When? Naturally, when the millennial age begins, when the bride "has made herself ready," as in chap. xix. 7, or, simply, as here, "is made ready," "adorned for her Husband." In the full sense, "the Holy City" can be said to come down no earlier than this. John has a vision of the millennial era, and yet in connection with the eternal state. We could not gather from the vision itself that that state was certainly included. We must gather the full import from the accompanying words, and from what we elsewhere learn concerning the oneness of the heavenly kingdom. It is seen simply coming down in all its completeness, or in its maximum greatness and glory. John sees its descent as if over a mighty gulf of time. He sees nothing which indicates progressive growth or enlargement or adornment. The first thought suggested by the vision is

that the city was built in heaven, and that from the foundation to the topstone, and made perfect in all its parts, and then at one and the same time came down to the earth, and made to rest upon a great rock or mountain prepared for it. Such, many have taken it literally to have been. They set aside all symbol. But, when we look through the symbol to the reality, we see that this apparently instantaneous descent is the work of many ages. We have illustrated what we here mean again and again by referring to this, that the use and wont of this Book is to represent the objects of these visions at their maximum development. We repeat, so it was with the wild beasts of Daniel, which rose, as if in an instant, from the bosom of the stormy sea. So also the beasts of this Book, from the sea on the one hand and from the abyss on the other. Nay, we find the pictorial symbol so constructed as to set forth an entire history. Thus the most wonderful pictorial symbol of the dragon in heaven in an attitude of hostility to the sun-robed woman, with his seven heads and ten horns, represents the whole Bible history of the antagonism of Satan to the people of God, from his first opposition to the converted woman and her converted seed, or to the redeemed people of God, and specially as the animating spirit of the world under seven mystic heads or pagan empires, and, after these had passed away, throughout the final period of his delusive and injurious work, through the agency of the ten kings or kingdoms destined to arise after all these heads had fallen, or after these empires had passed away.

The same may be said of the pictorial symbol of the beast of the twelfth chapter, likewise with seven heads and ten horns, one of the heads as if wounded to death and restored to life and power. In this we have also a whole history, —a history of both Pagan and Papal Rome in one, persecuting and destroying the Christian Church, and continuing to exist and to crush that Church down through the ages, or as long as the mystic horns or literal kingdoms were permitted to "wear out the saints of the Most High." A like, and yet most unlike, history we have pictorially presented to our view in the grand vision of the great Warrior on the white horse, with many diadems on His head, with many names on His person, followed by His great army, also on white horses, clothed in white linen, "the righteousness of saints." Here, Christ appears as if after the last battle had been fought and the last conquest won, even having all His many diadems on His sacred Head, or as if His blessed empire were already complete, and yet so evidently the same Conqueror of the sixth seal, and the same High Priest and Head of the Church

who first appeared in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, as to set forth His entire career—that is to say, the history of the great warfare of Christ from the Day of Pentecost down to the very Millennium is here revealed. Yet, in all these cases, the object is set forth in its last and highest form of development or of life. So, apparently here, we have a picture of the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down from heaven, fully built and perfectly adorned, as if all were a direct and simultaneous creation of the great Jehovah, and yet such and so described that, whilst in the sense already suggested coming down from heaven, we are led to know that it was really and divinely built on earth of living stones and by the hands of men of many generations.

The very name, "Holy City," connecting it with the Holy City which was for so many ages trodden by unconverted men, demonstrates that it existed, and so had really come down from heaven, in the sense first referred to, many a long period before it existed as here described, in full growth, fit for being the bride of Christ, and adorned as for her coming marriage with the Great King. Then, again, we know that those, to whom we have been alluding as, like Christ Himself, not of this world, but from above and from His Divine Father, were spoken of as the bride of Christ, even from the very first. In them, just come from above, as Christ Himself expressly declares, we thus have what we may call the Infant Bride. After Pentecost, this Infant had not a little grown in stature and in strength. For ages she continued to grow, just as one after another of the sons and daughters of men were born again or from above, and so became the sons and daughters of the living God. For a very long period, for the forty-two mystic months to which we have already referred, she ceased to grow, nay, shrunk as if to all the littleness and powerlessness of a second childhood, appearing, as we have found, at the beginning of that period, under the very name both there and here truly and divinely given to her, "the Holy City," and now reappearing, but in all her perfect growth, her highest beauty, her richest adornment, the prepared bride, the true and faithful wife of the Lamb, Christ Jesus. We might have put the descent of this mystic city in a different light. Potentially, all came down when Christ came down from heaven to earth. In the Redeemer-King really came down the kingdom of the redeemed. In His own Divine and human Person came down all the elements and potencies of that kingdom. Had the whole human race existed at one time, and all received their descending Lord, all would have become new creatures in Him, all would have become the

children of God, all would have become the everlasting kingdom of Jesus Christ. The like idea may be expressed of the Sacred Scriptures, which we may view as coming down from heaven to earth, with all their life-giving and life-perfecting power, like Christ, with all the elements and potencies of that same kingdom; so that, whenever they were received into the mind and heart, they would exert their vitalising, transforming power in converting the world, of which Christ speaks as "from beneath," into the true Church, which He shows to be "from above." Once more, we might say that the Holy City has been coming down all along in the person of the ever-descending Holy Spirit, the great regenerating Spirit of God, whose work it has always been to give new and heavenly life to the children of men, and thus to build upon the Living Rock those countless living stones which form this very city, "the New Jerusalem." However, we have pointed to the real and simple fact that the city has been ever coming down as this Spirit has been at work in renewing the minds and hearts and wills of men.

Looking over, as we have said, a mighty gulf of time, John sees no part of the progressive work, no part of the prosperous and adverse operations of the future, but is enabled to behold in the remote distance this glorious object, all completed and beautiful, descending as indeed a truly Divine and heavenly object to this world of ours. To his eyes it would appear as if clothed with all that perfection of strength and loveliness combined, which can literally belong to the same object in only its actually celestial glory and beauty. At the same time he was made to understand that it really belonged to the millennial age, and was simply and solely the restored and perfected Holy City, long changed into the unholy and worldly Babylon, the false city and bride of Christ, the real city and bride of the antichristian beast. We intentionally thus again refer to Babylon, as the professedly true holy city, but the actually hostile and unholy city, that we may once more repeat that, as the Babylon of this Book is certainly no mere material city, no mere material Rome, but a thoroughly mystic city built on those many mystical waters which symbolised many literal nations or peoples, great and real and yet invisible and symbolical; so the Holy City of this Book is undoubtedly of the same description, having no local material site, no visible material form, yet found in every land, among every people, the truly reigning power over the whole world. When Christ said to the woman of Samaria, "Believe Me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the

Father . . . But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth,"—He seems clearly to have set aside the retention or the construction of any local or material city, as peculiarly sacred or as in any sense the capital of the coming kingdom. His early disciples caught this large and world-embracing statement. They never thought of aught on earth corresponding to the doomed city of Jerusalem.

An early and unknown writer in what remains under the title of "The Epistle to Diognetus" has set forth the real character of apostolic Christians, and those of all after times,—even, we are assured, those of the Millennium—in a way which many of our own day would do well to remember:—"The Christians are distinguished from other men neither by country, nor language, nor the customs which they observe. For they neither inhabit cities of their own, nor employ a peculiar form of speech, nor lead a life which is marked out by any singularity. The course of conduct which they follow has not been devised by any speculation or deliberation of inquisitive men; nor do they, like some, proclaim themselves the advocates of any merely human doctrines. But, inhabiting Greek as well as barbarian cities, according as the lot of each of them has determined, and following the customs of the natives in respect to clothing, food, and the rest of their ordinary conduct, they display to us their wonderful and confessedly striking method of life. They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers. They marry, as do all (others). . . . They pass their days on earth, but they are *citizens of heaven*. They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives. They love all men, and are persecuted by all. They are unknown and condemned; they are put to death and restored to life. They are poor, yet make many rich. . . . They are evil spoken of, and yet are justified. . . . They are assailed by the Jews as foreigners, and are persecuted by the Greeks; yet those that hate them are unable to assign a reason for their hatred. To sum up all in one word—what the soul is in the body, that are Christians in the world. The soul is dispersed through all the members of the body, and Christians are scattered through all the cities of the world. The soul dwells in the body, yet is not of the body; and Christians dwell in the world, yet are not of the world. The invisible soul is guarded by the visible

body, and Christians are known indeed to be in the world, but their godliness remains invisible. . . . The immortal soul dwells in a mortal tabernacle; and Christians dwell as sojourners in corruptible (bodies), looking for an incorruptible dwelling in the heavens. . . . God has assigned them this illustrious position, which it were unlawful for them to forsake." Such were those in early days, who collectively formed at once "the Holy City" and the bride of Christ. Such we now find, in greatly increased numbers, in our own times. Between their day and ours lies the long period, not yet ended, of apostasy and antichristian persecution. All lived on earth, yet, as above said, all were *citizens of heaven*. In this, which is just what the New Testament affirms again and again, we find the true key to what we have been maintaining—that though the millennial Church is here directly referred to and described, the heavenly and eternal is also implied. Christians of all ages, pre-millennial and millennial alike, live like other men on earth, and yet all the while are citizens of heaven, so that, as they pass away from earth, they awake in heaven and find their vacant places prepared to receive them. Hence one vast difference between the mystic Babylon and the mystic Jerusalem: the former is set forth as absolutely and for ever destroyed; while the latter, though described as millennial or as existing for the mystical thousand years, is not at all said to pass away, nay, its citizens are said, chap. xxii. 5, to "reign for ever and ever,"—they never die, they never cease to constitute the New Jerusalem, they simply and successively pass from earth to heaven, and they do so till those of the last generation are changed "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," and so, like all who went before them, to put on those incorruptible bodies, in which they shall form the celestial and eternal "Church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven."

(4) "*Made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.*" She has thus risen to her full height, and to the perfection of her beauty. Of course, the imperfections of time have to be excepted. She is not co-extensive with the human family. Only we may say here, what we have kept in view all along, but have not sufficiently clearly expressed, that, as just indicated, the imperfections of time may belong to the numbers as well as to the virtues of the saved. We might go beyond the record, if we affirmed broadly that all men without exception would certainly be saved during the long triumphant reign of Christ and His people on earth. The language of Old Testament prophecy is sometimes apparently absolute, when

only comparative, or at least only almost universal completeness, is intended. And so it may be here. We cannot tell; and must leave the question of an absolutely universal conversion to Christ necessarily unsettled, assured that such conversion shall at least be of such vast and all but universal extent as to warrant all the glorious description here given of the Holy Millennial City. And as she is called holy and never great, whilst Babylon is called great and never holy, it is a happy thing thus to know, not only that all holiness is true greatness, but that this Holy City is destined to become actually infinitely greater and more enduring than Babylon. Here, too, we have a wonderful contrast between the two women, or two cities, or two Churches of this Book. We have pointed to the contrast between the sun-clad, star-crowned woman seen in heaven, and the woman seated on the beast, clothed in all the grandeur of worldly display, with the sweet but poisonous cup of sinful and guilty pleasures in her hand.

And now we are reminded of the same fearful contrast, only under a different symbolic form. What a contrast between the latter and this heavenly and glorious Bride or Holy City coming down to earth, "having the glory of God, her light like unto a stone most precious, the glory of God lightening it, and the Lamb the lamp thereof, needing no sun or moon to shine upon it, and having no temple," for the high and holy reason that "the Lord God, the Almighty and the Lamb, are the Temple thereof." Grand as this description is, we have been led to consider a very far simpler, and seemingly inferior, description of the dress and adornment of this bride and wife of the Lamb, chap. xix. 8, where it is simply said, "And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright (and) pure: for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints." Simple words, but words which should teach us, which should teach all mankind, what is most beautiful and precious in itself and in the sight of God and of all beings capable of judging aright, in which man or angel can appear, on earth or in heaven—even a garment of bright and pure and perfect righteousness. We have already been led to think of this righteousness as the armour of the Christian soldier, the armour of light, with which we cannot fail to win and conquer the world for Christ and for God. If the people here alluded to were, as many maintain, the children of a literal resurrection, the bride could not be exhorted and encouraged to do all, by prayer and action, to rise to the full height of this glorious righteousness, that thus she might win and conquer. If she literally rose from the dead, or literally came down from heaven, she must,

at the best, be clothed in the righteousness with which she was clothed on earth, and so could not be called upon, like the Jerusalem of Isaiah, to "put on her beautiful garments, to shake herself from the dust, to loose herself from the bands of her neck," and to be thus prepared to win all hearts to Christ, to conquer the whole world, and to reign with Christ on earth for the mystic thousand years. Thus, and otherwise, the symbolic view of this and other visions rise in practical value far above the literal, which is so often magnified because of its supposed higher practical power.

Vers. 3, 4. "And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His peoples, and God Himself shall be with them, (and be) their God: and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes: and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away."

(1) The tabernacle was the dwelling-place of Jehovah under the Mosaic economy,—the symbolic palace of the Great King, with its mercy-seat or throne of the Redeemer-King of Israel; and thus, along with other things, was specially expressive of His presence with His people. A mighty voice was heard from the throne, apparently of God or of Christ, proclaiming the glorious fact that now this symbol of the Divine presence, and therefore the Divine presence itself, is with men,—not with any one nation, as of old, or with any one class of people, but with men in general, with mankind: the whole family of man having become the family of God; so that He now dwells among them as He dwells in heaven among the angels of light or among the saints in glory, if not in all His glory, yet in His richest grace. How transporting the vision of John! They shall be His peoples; implying that all peoples shall be His. The whole earth will be full of the knowledge of Jehovah. The earthly blessedness of mankind will be great. What this world would really be if, for some few generations, all men loved their Heavenly Father and Divine Redeemer as many of the more highly Christian of the present day actually do, and so loved and served one another as this would imply, we cannot possibly imagine. All unjust laws and evil customs would be repealed and abolished. The art of war, cultivated to the highest pitch and at the greatest expense, would cease to attract the highest genius and greatest energy of the world. The arts of peace, already greatly advanced, would be cultivated to the highest degree. The suppression of vice and the exercise of every virtue would normally develop

and bring to perfection the whole constitution of man spiritual and moral, mental, social, physical. How beautiful the whole heart of man, thus loving God and man, thus having all its warmest and best affections set upon their proper objects! How happy the whole world, when selfishness and self-seeking are abolished, when rich and pure philanthropy has taken its place, when God shall be felt to have taken up His loving and gracious abode in every heart, when heaven shall seem as if come down to earth, and when Christ or God in Him shall be seen and felt and enjoyed as indeed "all in all."

(2) Human happiness will thus seem to be complete. Hence the beautiful words which follow, and which some think can alone refer to the absolutely sinless and perfect state of heaven—" *And He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.*" How much of Divine parental tenderness and love is here! God becomes as the tenderest and most loving of mothers, comforting and wiping off the tear-drop from the eyes of her frightened or suffering little one. That these words may, comparatively at least, apply to the millennial world, we find sufficient illustration in Isaiah xxv. 6-8, where even death, as in next clause before us, is said to pass away: "And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things. . . . And He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering that is cast over all peoples. . . . He hath swallowed up death for ever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the reproach of His people shall He take away from off all the earth." This last clause implies that the preceding words, which are as strong as any used of the New Jerusalem, pertain to this world, and doubtless to the millennial period, though we may say, in some sense, to all Christians. Tears are not said never to flow: they are said to be ever wiped away.

Let us remember that the converted race is here spoken of, and not the comparatively few and highly favoured followers of Christ, which God is thus to bless. To grasp the thought of the promised good, we must remember the countless sources of human grief and sorrows and even floods of tears. All these sources are to be removed. What sources of ever-flowing tears do we find in the world as it is, and as it always has been in the absence of gospel light and comfort! How every human vice issues in streams of suffering and of tears! What has not "man's inhumanity to man" done to create a whole ocean of tears and woe? Apart from Christ, death is indeed the king of terrors. Where there is no hope of reunion, what awful sorrow and despair the prospect of it in relation

to the separation of the most loving, or to one's own departure from all that is fair and pleasing in this transient life! God, and God alone, in and through Jesus Christ, can meet the wants and woes, the sadness and sorrow, the despondency and despair, of this sinful and perishing world. He, and He only, can wipe away the tears from all faces. Nor will He do so apart from the mutual love and sympathy, the mutual kindness and help of men—men renewed and made like the Son of God, men revering and loving God as their common Father, and loving and serving one another as a common brotherhood. The mass of evil to be removed and the amount of good to be produced by God, and through Christ and His people, are simply beyond all human measurement, before all hearts shall be happy, all minds be contented, all prospects be bright, and all tears be wiped away. How vast the promise, then, here given! How vast the work of Christ on earth! How glorious our world when that work shall be complete! The strong Son of God is equal to the task. He shall not faint or grow weary till He has accomplished all, and so has established judgment in all the earth.

(3) "*And death shall be no more.*" Surely this can be true only of the celestial world, many a one has said, and strongly maintained. Yet we have just found Isaiah expressly declaring the contrary. In some high sense, besides that which Paul puts upon them, his words relate to earth and to the children of men. In a very high sense it is true that, to all Christians, Christ has "abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel." Nay, as Paul grandly declares, all things belong to Christians, not only life, but also death itself. This direst foe Christ has turned into a real friend. The same is implied in the familiar and oft-repeated words of Christ, "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth on Me, though he die, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die." Psalm lxxii. is, we may say, emphatically millennial, and yet relates to the whole kingdom of Christ from beginning to end; and ever since Watts wrote what we may call his New Testament version of it, Christians have been joyfully and triumphantly singing what they often find it hard to believe, even what we here find as to death, and what is afterwards said also of the curse of sin:—

"Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Doth his successive journeys run,
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.

" Blessings abound where'er He reigns ;
 The prisoner leaps to lose his chains ;
 The weary find eternal rest ;
 And all the sons of want are blest.

" Where He displays His healing power,
Death and the curse are known no more ;
 In Him the tribes of Adam boast
 More blessings than their father lost."

In fact, the great gift of God to every human being is eternal life through Jesus Christ, to be freely and at once accepted by all who hear the gospel of the grace of God. John v. 24, " Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath *passed out of death into life*" ; that is to say, to Christians of every age, Christ Himself being Judge, "*Death shall be no more.*"

(4) "*Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more : the first things are passed away.*" We cannot by any means say that we have approached such a state of things. Still, whilst most terrible evils exist, causing fearful suffering, and yet threatening to cause the mightiest revolutions, we cannot but see the greatest progress wherever the power of Christianity is widely diffused and deeply felt. The contrast is inconceivable between the state of ancient nations and that of present Christian peoples, or between that of countries still heathen and that of the latter, even though we cannot regard any kingdom as yet at all truly Christian, or under the full power of Jesus Christ. The future will grow brighter and happier and better as that power goes on to prevail. In the eternal world alone can these words find an absolutely perfect fulfilment. Comparatively they will be fulfilled, as they are intended to announce, throughout the Millennium of all the promises of Scripture. That they relate to this glorious period we have proved already, by pointing to the fact that in Isaiah lxx. 19 we have really the same prophecy of the same time, " And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying." "*The first things are passed away.*" The whole world, formerly heathen, Godless, Christless, hopeless, selfish, ambitious, without true benevolence or philanthropy, shall be changed into a world of beings loving God and loving one another, cheerful in life and joyous in death, the citizens of heaven as well as of earth, all one in Christ, all one among themselves, all seeing and loving God and Christ in all, all seeking the common temporal and eternal good of all, all free

physically and morally from the diseases and sufferings and wants due to widespread hereditary and acquired habits of vice, and all living in harmony with the laws of nature, the spirit of grace, the will of God, and so everywhere with one another.

4. *Vers. 5, 6.* "And He that sitteth on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And He saith, Write : for these words are faithful and true. And He said unto me, They are come to pass. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end."

These words were addressed to the ear of John ; and they are intended for the minds and hearts of all who read them, of every land and age. They set forth the great work of Jehovah, the Redeemer-God of the true Israel. "*Behold, I make all things new.*" This new-creative work has been going on from the beginning, and especially since the birth of Jesus Christ. At the time here referred to, the words suggest that that vast work will go on with unwonted rapidity. Most emphatically shall all mankind be made new,—new creatures in Christ Jesus, new creatures through the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit. Thus the whole constitution of the world shall be made new. All men and all nations shall stand, voluntarily and truly, in new relations to one another. By way of strengthening faith in God and in His promises, John is told to write that "*these words are faithful and true,*" the true and faithful promises of the eternal God. Nay, Jehovah speaks as if the future had been already converted into the present, and as if all were already fulfilled, "calling things that yet are not as if they actually were." "They are come to pass." Thus the great and changeless Jehovah adds, as if to seal His promise with His oath, "*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.*"

5. *Vers. 6, 7.* "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit these things ; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son."

This, with the corresponding one of next chapter, is one of the freest, most cheering, and most delightful invitations of the Sacred Scriptures. The will of God for the salvation of all men is here clearly revealed. No one who wills need fear lest there should be no divine and eternal life for him. This thirst for God, for good, for peace, for that eternal life, for heaven, is common to man. Yet it may be quenched by sinful indulgence or by perseverance in sin. God has created all the natural desires which combine to form this one thirst for real profit and lasting good. God, who made the human heart and implanted all these desires,

means to meet them and to secure the most complete satisfaction. In only one way can they be satisfied. Christ alone can fill the human heart and satisfy the healthy longings of every created soul. Here the Divine promise is addressed to every human being. All is to be received as a rich, free, eternal gift of God, "without money and without price," and that by the simple reception of Christ Himself. Yet what follows may seem to be inconsistent with this. After all, it may be said, the reward is reserved, not for the simple receiver, but for the final conqueror. True; but there is no inconsistency. He who truly receives is sure to love and to fight and to conquer: "This is the victory which overcometh the world: even our faith." In one sense, all is simply receiving, constantly receiving, holding fast what is received, and so refusing to part with what has been received, and thus overcoming all temptation to part with what has been received. In Christ all conquer. Thus the glorious promise is enjoyed. Receiving Christ, we are received of God. Loving Christ, we are loved of God. Serving Christ, we are honoured and blessed of God. Suffering for or with Christ, we shall be glorified by God, we shall be treated as His children; "and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ." How vast and glorious an inheritance,—even "all things,"—the entire universe, nay, God Himself and all that He has and can use for the perfect and eternal well-being of His children. How glorious the future of every child of God! How infinitely rich! How ineffably blessed! How dazzling the prospect! Sometimes how hard to believe, through the very grandeur and glory!

6. *Ver. 8.* "But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and idolaters, and all liars, their part (shall be) in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death."

How awful, nay, how terrible the contrast! Elsewhere the Bible clearly shows that, for all such, there is the most ample and free forgiveness and salvation. One word expresses the one and only preventive of perfect and eternal salvation; and that one word is, *Impenitence*. These, then, are the finally impenitent, the finally persistent in sin of some form or other, though that sin may seem very small. Not only those guilty of the grossest crimes are here doomed to destruction, but even the "fearful," those who may be most amiable and even adorned with many virtues, but who have not that supreme love for Christ which alone can make one truly devoted and loyal to Him and ready to be "faithful unto death" on His

account, are here put first in this fearful list of the unsaved and finally lost. All should remember the preceding and most faithful announcement, that the conqueror and the conqueror alone can be called a true son of God or a real heir of all things. All should keep in view the great and terrible fact, that the slave to sin of any kind is unsaved, and outside the great and happy circles of the true and immortal family of God. Most solemnly is it here set forth, that the pleasures of sin bring about the loss of the blessedness of holiness and heaven, and that by fleeing from the danger of natural death many literally rush to the inconceivable woes of the second death.

7. *Ver. 9.* "And there came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, who were laden with the seven last plagues; and he spake with me, saying, Come hither, and I will show thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb."

These angels had poured out their plagues on those who were specially connected with the false Church. One of them had been fitly appointed to show John that Church under the figure of "the great harlot that sitteth upon many waters." We are told, "And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness: and I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet-coloured beast . . . and upon her forehead a name written, Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of the harlots and of the abominations of the earth." This false bride or wife was the city Babylon; or, Babylon was the professed Church of Christ. Here one of the same angels is fitly appointed to show to John the true bride or wife of Christ, we have quite similar words, "And he carried me away in the Spirit," in this case "to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City Jerusalem." Thus, Babylon, the false Church on earth, was the false bride or Church, long occupying the place of the true, or of Jerusalem; and, now, Jerusalem, the true Church on earth, is the true bride or wife, and is here set forth as taking her own proper place. In this way, she simply and justly assumes the position whence she had been removed. She is the same Church or bride still, only more fully grown, more fair and beautiful, more richly adorned with all the true ornaments which are, like herself, of heaven and of God. She is constituted of all who are truly united or married to Jesus Christ. Confusion of ideas is sometimes manifested as to who this bride or wife really is.

Some would say she can be none else than the whole Church in heaven, complete as to number of constituent members, and perfect

in character and spirit. Now, in the very highest sense this is most assuredly correct. However, this is very far from excluding another view of this bride or wife of Christ. Just as Jehovah was the Husband of ancient Israel considered as a visible kingdom, and that from generation to generation, and so continually acted as such to His people, so Christ is to be regarded as the Husband of the true Israel of every age and country, and to be viewed as ever acting accordingly. But this is not all. Even a single Church or community of Christians may be contemplated in the same light, or as the bride and wife of Jesus Christ. Thus Paul writes of the Corinthian Church, 2 Cor. xi. 2, "I espoused you to one husband, that I might present you (as) a pure virgin to Christ." And so of individual Christians; every one of them may be viewed as married to Christ. In all these cases the language is figurative; and we must not the less regard the millennial Church as the true bride or wife of Christ, because, in point of literal fact, only the complete and perfectly pure and holy Church in heaven can in the highest sense be called by that precious and endearing name. The same might be said of the figurative use of the expression "temple of God," which may be equally well applied to the individual Christian, or single Christian Church, or the whole Church on earth at any one time, or, in the highest sense, the whole Church of Christ in the heavenly and eternal state. So we might repeat the same words as to another expression, that of "the body of Christ." We need hardly say that we have here a second vision of the New Jerusalem. This seems added to the other by way of increased clearness, nearness, completeness and fulness of detail.

8. *Ver.* 10. "And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God."

Here we are reminded of the corresponding vision in the prophecy of Ezekiel, in which the prophet is made to see the frame of a city resting on "a very high mountain," really the same as that here shown to John, only, in keeping with the time of Ezekiel, of a form suitable to the idea of the literal city and temple of Jerusalem; whilst here the whole is more in harmony with the more advanced and enlarged conception of the Christian economy. Alford: "*ἐπ' αὐτὴν*, as we say in some parts of England, *on to*, combining motion towards and position upon," implying that John, like Ezekiel, was on the mountain. Alford adds, "This vision had begun in *ver.* 2, but the apostle is now carried to this 'specular mount' to have a nearer

and fuller view of it. The city must not be conceived of as *on* or covering the mountain, but as seen descending to a spot close by it: so in Ezek. xl. 2, whether we read 'by' or 'upon' as in our margin." We rather think we must suppose the frame of the city to have been on the mountain, as there would have been no need for the prophet to ascend so high an one in order to see a frame of such dimensions and to mark all the details of careful measurement. There thus seems to have been some symbolic purpose in so placing the city and temple of the future Jerusalem. May we not find a key in the figurative language of Micah and Isaiah, "In the latter days," the very time here referred to, "it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow unto it. And many nations shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among many peoples. . . . Nation shall not lift up sword against nation . . . they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it"? If the temple was thus elevated, so must the whole city. Would not this also give the key to the great height of the New Jerusalem? Be this as it may, the city is said to come down, "having the glory of God," her real glory and beauty, her real adornment for her Lord.

9. *Vers. 11.* "Her light was like unto a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone, clear as crystal."

This would seem to refer to her general appearance as seen descending from heaven, and as implying her light and purity and loveliness, and her manifest fitness to show that her real builder was not man, but God.

10. *Vers. 12, 13.* "Having a wall great and high; having twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names written thereon, which are (the names) of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east three gates; and on the north three gates; and on the south three gates; and on the west three gates."

These were no material walls and gates, as the mountain was no material mountain. All was symbolic of the exaltation and safety and glory and blessedness of the true Israel of God, whose city this is certainly shown to be. "Her walls are Salvation; and her gates, Praise." On the gates are the names of the twelve tribes, in

keeping with the fact that, throughout this Book, Christians are called by the name of Israel; and to show who have rightful access to this holy and heavenly City of God, even all the twice-born among men. The angel-guard provides for the entrance of all true citizens alone: Isa. xxvi. 2, "Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in;" and lii. 1, "Henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean."

11. *Ver. 14.* "And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."

Clearly indicating that apostolic Christian Israel is meant throughout. As Paul says of Gentile and Jewish Christians, united in forming the one true Church, "Ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom the whole building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit." This city, like the holy temple of Paul, has really one foundation, even Christ Himself, as fully revealed by His own apostles and prophets, or by all who spoke of Him as they were inspired by the Holy and unerring Spirit, of whom Christ Himself said, John xvi. 13, 15, "When the Spirit of truth is come, He shall guide you into all the truth. . . . He shall glorify Me: for He shall take of Mine, and shall declare (it) unto you." He and He alone is the Rock of Ages on which this new and everlasting Jerusalem is built. He is the one true and lofty Mountain on which the city and temple of the living God securely and eternally rest. He is the Foundation, other than which no man or angel can lay in Zion, or on which alone that glorious temple can be built. No material rock, no material wall, no material gates, no material streets, no material light, no material river of living water, no material trees of life, are needed. All is living. All is real. All is spiritual. All is divine. All is one city, one temple, one body, one Church; all on Christ and in Christ; all one in Him, and He all in all in them.

12. *Vers. 15-21.* "And he that spake with me had for a measure a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth four-square, and the length thereof is as great as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs: the length and the breadth and the height thereof are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, a hundred and forty and

four cubits, (according to) the measure of a man, that is, of an angel. And the building of the wall thereof was jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto pure glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the several gates was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass."

(1) "*The measurement of the city.*" In chap. xi. 1, 2, even the temple was not measured, not to mention the city, and that because the people or Christian Church was to become corrupt or pagan, and continue so for the mystic forty-two months. The Church, however, is now restored to purity and power, and has become greater and more glorious than ever. Hence, the city representing the millennial Church is described as measured, and at once of vast magnitude and of richest beauty. All is now significant of predicted greatness, of perfect completeness, of heavenly excellence and of Divine erection—a city worthy of the King and kingdom whose it is. Like that of Ezekiel, "the name of the city from that day shall be Jehovah-Shamma, The Lord is there."

(2) *Dimensions of the city.* Its size is very great; and, very strangely, its "*length and breadth and height are equal*." No clearer proof could we well have that all is figurative. Such a height is simply out of harmony with the constitution of our world. It is not therefore a less fit complex symbol or spiritual hieroglyph. Alford: "The 12,000 stadii are in all probability the whole circumference, 1000 to each space between the gates. . . . The supposition of many expositors, that the city thus formed a monstrous cube, 3000 stadii in length, in breadth, and in height, really does not appear to be necessarily included in these words. Nay, it seems to be precluded by what next follows, where the angel *measures the height* of the wall. . . . The words are open . . . to two interpretations: (1) that the city, including the hill or rock on which it was placed, and which may be imagined as descending with it, formed such a cube as seems here described: or, (2) that there is some looseness of use in the word *ἴσα*, and that we must understand that the length and breadth were equal to each other and the height equal all round. Of these two I prefer the former, as doing no violence to the words, and as recalling somewhat the form of the earthly Jerusalem on its escarpment above the valley of the Kedron."

Webster and Wilkinson: "The city shall be in the shape of a cube, the most perfect form; the impossibility of this according to earthly things shows that the whole is enigmatical, and suggests to us that we ought not to form any gross conceptions of the city in our imagination, but to deduce instruction from the emblem. It may imply the stability, proportion, and uniformity of heavenly things, and the incomprehensible nature and glory of them. . . . The stadius was a measure of distance, about 201 English yards. . . . The measurement of the wall does not seem to correspond to that of the height of the city. Possibly the breadth of the wall was meant." We have virtually said the same, and prefer this view to that of Alford.—"Speaker's Bible": "The description here given does not decide absolutely whether 12,000 *stadia* (or, 1378·97 English miles) is the length of each side of the 'New Jerusalem.' . . . According to Vitringa, Wetstein, . . . Alford, the entire circuit of the city is meant. . . . This latter explanation is avowedly prompted by the desire to reduce the vast dimensions of the city; the difficulty being caused by forgetfulness that the whole picture here given is symbolical. In either case the dimensions surpass any natural explanation; while in the latter case there is both a departure from the original picture by Ezekiel, and also a departure from the plain sense of the words which follow. In Apocalyptic symbolism 1000 expresses a vast number; and, when multiplied by twelve,—the number of perfection,—there results a signification adapted to what we here read of the City of God. When 1000 is multiplied by the square of *twelve* the meaning is 'a multitude which no man could number.'" As a whole we deem this correct. Take what view we may, to suppose the height to be no more than one-fourth of the circuit of the 12,000 *stadia* of Alford, is simply out of all natural reckoning. Such is an example of the frightful results of confounding symbols with the things symbolised. The plain fact that the cities of Ezekiel and of John represent one and the same city, and yet differ immensely in their dimensions, clearly proves that they cannot possibly be both equally real, and that they can only and easily be deemed perfectly consistent on the hypothesis that both are symbolical, and that the exact numerical proportions is a matter of no symbolic importance.

(3) *The wall measured.* If we suppose this city, like that of Ezekiel, to rest on the high mountain itself, as we have suggested, we need not wonder at the apparent disproportion between the height of the city and that of the wall. The latter is said to be 144,000 cubits,—a vast number, the same as that of the sealed

Israelites, and evidently to be taken in an enigmatical sense. All will thus appear of vast extent, of greatest strength, of perfect safety, and of heavenly beauty. These lofty walls are built of jasper, which is here used as a specially precious stone, "clear as crystal."

(4) "*And the city was pure gold, like unto pure glass.*" As the Temple of Solomon was richly ornamented, and to a great extent also covered with this most precious metal; to set forth the grandeur of the palace of the Divine King, who dwelt therein in the midst of His people, and thus at the same time to indicate the exceeding glory of His true temple in the heavens; so we seem to have here the same precious metal largely employed in relation to the whole New Jerusalem—*first*, to symbolise the essential and heavenly excellence of the millennial Church, and *next*, to do the same in the case of the still higher and more glorious Church of the heavenly world.

(5) "*The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones,*" each one being said to be one stone: "*the first was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst.* And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the several gates was one pearl; and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass." These foundations, representing the whole apostolic revelation of Jesus Christ, the only true and glorious Foundation of the Christian Church, are here set forth as most precious and excellent. The gates, expressive of all the like precious and excellent invitations of the gospel on the one hand, and, on the other, of all the rich and precious rights and privileges of the true Israel, are thus also finely represented as of one great pearl each. The very size of such pearls clearly implies that all is finely symbolical of the more than human and earthly, or of the truly Divine and supernatural origin and character of the city, or of the millennial Church symbolised by it. All is pure and perfect, all is glorious and beautiful, all is worthy of God and of Jesus Christ. All testifies to the transcendent worth of the great Redemption, of the future purity and exaltation of the Church of Christ, of the essential dignity and glory and blessedness of redeemed mankind, whether on earth or in heaven. In Isaiah liv. 11-13 we have a beautiful allusion to this state of the Church, after many a season of suffering and sorrow: "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will set thy stones in fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy pinnacles

of rubies, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy border of pleasant stones. And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children." The identity of the visions of Ezekiel and John is further demonstrated by what the former has said, chap. xlviii. 30-35: "And these are the goings out of the city; on the north side 4500 (*reeds*) by measure; and the gates of the city shall be after the names of the tribes of Israel; three gates northward: the gate of Reuben, one; the gate of Judah, one; the gate of Levi, one, etc."

13. *Vers. 22-27.* "And I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple thereof. And the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it: for the glory of God did enlighten it, and the lamp thereof (is) the Lamb. And the nations shall walk by the light thereof: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory into it. And the gates thereof shall in no wise be shut by day (for there shall be no night there): and they shall bring the glory and the honour of the nations into it: and there shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination or a lie: but only they which are written in the Lamb's Book of Life."

(1) "*And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple thereof.*" This is in harmony with the whole spirit and character of the gospel dispensation, or of the Christian Church. Jesus expressed the same fact in His words to the Samaritan woman, John iv. 21, 23: "Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father. . . . The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." No local or material temple, like that of Jerusalem, where Jehovah specially revealed Himself, and required special and prescribed worship, would distinguish the Christian Church or true Israel of God. The real and living Temple of Jehovah is Jesus Christ, whether in Himself or as the Foundation of His Church, which is the temple of God; or, as we have already brought out, the whole Church, or any one individual Church, or any one true Christian, may be regarded as a temple of the living God. If we take the whole Church or Jerusalem from above, there God is within, as in His holy temple or palace or dwelling-place. There He reveals Himself. There He is worshipped and served. He fills the whole with His presence, His light, His glory. Within that living temple, then, there can be no room for any material temple: the living and spiritual has superseded, and cannot contain any dead or material erection of man. Never should any material

place of worship be called a temple. Never should we seek to bring back the typical, imperfect, and superseded worship and services of ancient Israel. The redemptive work, the revelation of Jehovah as the God of salvation, the development of the eternal kingdom of God, is ever progressive, never retrogressive. Let all act in harmony with the truth and spirit of the dispensation under which we are placed, and of which the Blessed Redeemer is at the head. How marked the distinction between the Old and the New Testament dispensation! And yet, how perfectly consistent and mutually explanatory the two! One of the mighty factors in the development of the antichristian Church has been the re-introduction of the Jewish system, to the thorough perversion and corruption of the Christian. The dead past can never be safely united to the living present. We may seem to have departed from the exact form of words here employed, though we really set forth the same truth. The definite reason here given for the absence of a temple is very excellent and very beautifully expressed,—“For the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple thereof.” This is in harmony with what we have above said. It is equally true that the Church is the temple of God, and that God is the temple of the Church; just as the same thing is meant by Christ when He says, John xv. 5, “He that abideth in Me” on the one hand, and “I in Him,” on the other. The Church is in like manner the temple or abiding-place of Jehovah and of Jesus, or Jehovah and Jesus are the abiding-place or temple of the Church.

Alford: “The inhabitants need no place of worship or sacrifice, the Object of all worship being present, and the great Sacrifice Himself being there.” This is so far good; but it still suggests the idea of a local city or region, or fails to identify the symbolic city with the literal people.

“Speaker’s Bible”: “The entire city is now that which the Holy of Holies had formerly been—the locality of the immediate presence of God. The Temple and Temple-service have hitherto supplied the symbols which denote the condition of the Church on earth before the Judgment. This has now ceased: the Temple is no more; there is none seen in heaven. The redeemed being all priests unto God, the New Jerusalem is without temple, being all Temple.” This last observation, which fairly expresses what we have affirmed above, may be said to express the whole truth; but is strangely inconsistent with what goes before. The Church before and after the Judgment is viewed as greatly different. Before, the Temple and Temple-service supply the symbols which denote

the condition of the Church on earth; implying, apparently, that there is still a Temple down to the Judgment. If not, why add, "This has now ceased: the Temple is no more; there is none seen in heaven"? Under the Christian dispensation, does the Temple continue? or, is any temple seen on earth? Why, from the very beginning of that dispensation, and not merely during millennial times, no such temple, no temple built by the command of God or of Christ, was ever seen on earth. Many a temple, indeed, has been erected, and many an altar built within, and many a priest has officiated, and many a sacrifice has been offered: but to what Church do they all belong? To the Church of Christ? No, but to the Church of Antichrist, and to any other Church only in so far as antichristian error has been retained, and antichristian practices have been followed or re-introduced. The Jerusalem here spoken of is the Christian Church of all ages, but emphatically of the millennial period; and never has one temple been built by the hand of a Christian man with the sanction of the Head of the Christian Church, or without violation of the purity and perfection of Christian truth. Not only in heaven, but also on earth, *THE REDEEMED BEING ALL PRIESTS* (see chaps. i. 6; v. 10; xx. 6) *UNTO GOD, THE NEW JERUSALEM IS WITHOUT TEMPLE, BEING ALL TEMPLE*. Places for the open and united worship of the Blessed God will doubtless be multiplied vastly throughout the whole world. In these a pure and reverent service will assuredly be rendered. All will during the millennial ages be pure and simple and sublime. The presence of God and of the Lamb will everywhere be profoundly felt and richly enjoyed. The very constitution of man, under the exercise of all the affections and faculties, and with Christ and God in every heart, will rise to its full perfection.

The whole race will be elevated; yet all will be true both to human nature and to Divine grace. As men contemplate the race, thus renewed and refined, and fully devoted to the loving service of God, the Holy City will be seen on earth and everywhere, as if newly descended from heaven. No material city, any more than any material temple, will be seen; because, as above said, all will be city, all will be temple, all will be the dwelling-place of Christ and of God. In keeping with 1 Peter ii. 4, 5, all men having come to Christ, the "Living Stone," or great and glorious Living Foundation, will have been "as living stones built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." Such is the true city and temple of God and of Christ in every age in time and in all ages of eternity. In

the first chapter of this Book we may be said to have all this finely and perfectly symbolised in the vision of God in Christ, the royal High Priest in the midst of the golden candlesticks, the one and only High Priest in the midst of His countless royal priests, all made truly one, as of one Body and one Spirit, ever showing forth the praises of God. The treatment of the seven Churches symbolised suggested what we have regarded as Christ's own ideal of a Christian Church; and when, in the great and blessed future of even this world, the countless communities that shall compose the one grand community of the millennial Church, or of redeemed mankind, shall have realised that idea, "the tabernacle of God shall indeed be with men"; earth and heaven shall have virtually become one; and all the glories here ascribed to the New Jerusalem shall rest upon the whole ransomed and new-created race.

(2) "*And the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it: for the glory of God did enlighten it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb.*" How grand an object that of a city, at once large and beautiful, with all the light of the material sun fully shining upon it! How useful and necessary that sun to it! This city has no such need; and can bask in no such sunshine. It is visible, and yet invisible. We see the external homes of those invisible and immortal spirits which are full of the Divine light and love, but which we cannot see with our mere eyes of flesh. The brightest sunshine cannot bring them to light. This city, however on earth even now, is spiritual, divine, heavenly, eternal. It has a more glorious and lasting light than that of the brightest sun; and that because "the glory of God gives it light and the Lamb is the lamp thereof." How grand this conception! How true! It raises our minds to the true thought of the one and only Light of the universe,—of the Creator as the one and only Light of His vast creation. So here. The new Creator is the one and only Light of His new creation,—the Lamb, the Light or Lamp of His redeemed people,—Jehovah in Jesus Christ, the Light of the Church, the New Jerusalem, whether on earth or in heaven. Such is the case now. All who know Jesus, and God in Him, are all life as well as light. Separation from God through sin has caused all the darkness of the world. Reunion with God in Christ restores light, life, love, peace, hope, joy,—all real and lasting good. United to Christ, the soul, the man, is translated from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light, the marvellous light of Jehovah. Jehovah in Jesus is the Light of the Church as to Himself, as to duty, as to salvation, as to this life and this world, as to immortality and the

world to come. This light is diffused through all, is in all, converts all into a city of light. When all rise to high and Christian life, doubts and difficulties disappear. Not only personal, but also social darkness and difficulty, will come to an end. If the whole world only walked in the light of Jehovah and of the Lamb, the peace, harmony, prosperity, freedom from evil of every kind which would follow, would give the deepest assurance of the whole truth of God, of Christ, and of Divine revelation. Let the Bible be simply and universally lived, or reduced to living practical form, and it will demonstrate its own true Divine origin. In Christ, all men are all light within, and all light without. God in Christ is the great and only Sun, both of this world and of the universe at large; and all in Him are like the angel standing in the sun, and can thence behold the whole moral creation, and that measurelessly far along the ages of eternity.

(3) "*And the nations shall walk by the light thereof: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory into it.*" This suggests a distinction between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdoms of the earth,—in fact, the distinction between Church and state, which will thus apparently remain apart to the end of time,—the state made up of all as they come into the world and act the part of citizens of the world, and the Church made up of all united to Christ and acting as subjects of His kingdom. Some would suppose the New Jerusalem to be the capital of the new earth; and that all men would thus be connected with it, as the whole people of Israel were connected with their capital. However, we must on no account so regard it, else we are sure to get thoroughly confused as to the symbol and the reality. The city may be set forth as having many inhabitants, just as the Church is said to have many children; but we must be careful to remember that this city is simply the collective body of the citizens, as the Church is simply the collective body of her children. "Paris is France," has often been said, but not in any exact or proper sense; but we speak most correctly when we say, Jerusalem is the Church, or, the Church is Jerusalem.

The real meaning seems to be that the Divine light which fills the Church, composed of all in whom Jehovah in Jesus Christ truly dwells, is the very light in which all men shall walk in order to the highest, present, personal, and social or political or national well-being,—in fact, the light which makes a man a good Christian, will at the same time make him a good citizen. The best Christian will be in the future what he generally is in the present time, the best

father, the best merchant, the best subject, the best magistrate, the best master, the best statesman, the best king. All nations will walk in the light of salvation. All nations will walk in the light of Jesus Christ. All nations will walk in "the light of Jehovah." The renewal of the heart and life is sure to add wisdom to every one who experiences it. We cannot suppose that any nation can walk in any literal light of its capital. Nations are even now more or less walking in the light of the Bible, in the wisdom of the people of God, in the counsels of the more enlightened followers of Christ, in the pure spirit of the gospel, and of all those who breathe that spirit. "Ye are the light of the world," is the declaration of Christ with respect to His people of any and of every age. To no small extent Christians are the light of England; and England is to some like extent the light of the world. Let the Church rise in every land in the light and glory, in the wisdom and goodness, in the strength and beauty, which ought largely to distinguish her; and, whilst all who are one with her will walk accordingly, all mankind will learn wisdom or follow her example. "All men will be blessed in Christ, and all nations shall call Him blessed."

"And the kings of the earth do bring their glory into it." There will thus be kings on earth, political rulers, organised communities, states greater or smaller, throughout the millennial period. This expression cannot possibly refer to the Church in heaven. The kings of the earth cannot visit that lofty place. They can most highly honour the religion of Jesus, the people of Jesus, the laws of His kingdom, the excellence of His subjects. They may be, as some of them now are, entirely unlike those who became antichristian and persecuted the saints of God. They may seek to be at once the humblest and most faithful servants of Christ, and the most upright and devoted rulers of their own people. They will no longer, like their antichristian predecessors, bow the knee to any earthly king who may profess to represent their only one and heavenly King, Jesus. They will acknowledge that the kingdom of heaven thus erected on earth transcends all the kingdoms of the world. Still, they will allow no one professedly connected with that kingdom to interfere authoritatively with them in the discharge of their royal or governmental duties; nor will they, like the antichristian and pagan kings before them, authoritatively interfere with the kingdom of Christ, as if they were the heads of the Churches within their own dominions, or as if they had any right to control the minds or consciences of their own people. Whatever they can as persons or as kings justly do, or do within the real limits of their own sphere, for the glory of

Christ, the advancement of His kingdom, or the good of His people throughout the world, they will gladly and disinterestedly do. They will act as Christian persons or Christian parents or Christian kings, according to the light and ability granted to them, just as other Christians will do in their several spheres and according to the various relations in which they stand to others.

The principle thus involved has long and very greatly been misunderstood. Kings have been supposed to have a rightful power, nay, to be under a Divine obligation, to use their royal authority in applying, not only their own private or personal resources, but also those of their subjects, in the support of the kingdom of heaven, or of that portion of it which commended itself to their own minds. They best bring their glory to the Church of Christ when they act most humbly and faithfully as simple and sincere members of it, when they discharge their own kingly duties in the purest Christian spirit, and when they most decidedly and conscientiously leave, nay, encourage, all their subjects to follow their own private or personal Christian light as subjects of Christ or in their relation to the kingdom of heaven. We are not to suppose these kings as not fully converted to God, or as outside the kingdom of Christ. In antichristian times, and in the earlier parts of this Book, "the kings of the earth" were regarded or spoken of as outside the true kingdom, and persecutors of it. Now, the whole race having been converted, the kings or rulers and peoples of the world are all supposed to be of that very kingdom; and here we are simply informed that all, in their respective relationships and spheres, will serve and honour the New Jerusalem or kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Much confusion of thought has obtained with respect to this; nor can it be avoided if we do not clearly discriminate between our duties as members of Christian Churches on the one hand, and our duties as citizens of the world on the other, or if we here confound the symbol with the thing symbolised, or even suppose that the symbolic city here alluded to belongs exclusively to the perfect or eternal state. Thus, because of this last mistake, Dean Alford, with all his clearness of mind, has utterly failed to understand this part of the vision. Hence his words, "Among the mysteries of this new heaven and new earth this is set forth to us: that besides the glorified Church, there shall still be dwelling on the renewed earth nations, organised under kings, and (chap. xxii. 2) saved by means of the influences of the heavenly city." There is really no mystery here at all, unless introduced by mistaken

interpretation. Let the Church be on earth as well as in heaven ; and then the nations and their kings, whilst continuing to act as such to one another, shall all act as subjects of the now common and universal kingdom of Christ. Instead of the symbolic city, where material walls and gates and streets are apt to become, in our imagination, more real than symbolic, or than they were ever intended to be, let us put the word Christianity, or keep by the expression the Christian Church, and then all ought to be clear and simple. The kings and nations of the earth will all be Christian. They will all walk in the light of Christian or saving truth. Whilst they will form themselves into countless Churches, like those symbolised by the seven golden candlesticks, only raised to the higher life and love and light of millennial times, they will remain the kings and nations of the earth or of this world still, "saved," as Allford says, "by means of the heavenly city" or of the Christian Church, of Christian truth, or, in simple fact, of Christ Himself.

(4) "*And the gates thereof shall in no wise be shut by day (for there shall be no night there).*" They need not be shut because of any danger during the long, and peaceful, and universally and pre-eminently Christian ages referred to. Nor shall they, as is also meant, be shut because of any darkness ; for "there shall be no night there." There can be no darkness or no night where Jehovah is the unceasing and everlasting Light. All must be perfect day. All is finely illustrated in Isa. lx., which contains a wonderful prophecy of this very period, and from which not a few of the very words before us are taken : "Arise, shine ; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples : but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And nations shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see : they all gather themselves together, they come to thee . . . the wealth of the nations shall come unto thee . . . they shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praises of the Lord. . . Thy gates also shall be open continually ; they shall not be shut day nor night ; that men may bring unto thee the wealth of the nations, and their kings led (with them) . . . And they shall call thee The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. . . I will also make thy officers Peace, and thine exactors Righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, desolation nor destruction within thy borders ; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. The sun shall be no more thy light by day ; neither for

brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. Thy people also shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land for ever; the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified. The little one shall become a thousand, and the small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in its time."

We have quoted thus fully, because of the flood of light thus cast upon the words before us. The two prophecies cast light upon one another. Both carry out the idea of a city; but we should thoroughly misunderstand both if we inferred that a literal material city was intended. John says there will be no night; whereas Isaiah speaks of "day and night": both mean "continually," or without interruption; and John introduces, or rather carries out, the idea common to both, that all darkness will have passed away when God has fully become the light of the millennial Jerusalem. How sublime and surpassing all human eloquence the words of the "rapt" prophet of ancient Israel! When treating of the destruction of Babylon, we were led to observe that, though symbolising the corrupt Church of Antichrist, the account of the character and destruction of that Church was presented to our minds in terms suitable for the description of the real city which was used symbolically in the Apocalyptic vision. Many have greatly erred in seeking for some actual city, some modern Babylon, whose character and destruction should actually correspond to the vision referred to; instead of simply seeking for such a Church or kingdom as was so symbolised, and thus finding the real object in that Church or kingdom and in its actual and final doom. So here. As many have erred in anticipating the existence of some great and glorious city, an actual New Jerusalem with walls and gates, with streets and houses, with men coming from all parts of the earth and bringing their literal wealth and glory along with them. And so they mingle the light of the created sun with the uncreated light of the great Creator, as Alford strangely and most grossly does.

"And the nations shall walk by means of her light: "i.e., she shall be so bright as to serve for light,—for sun and moon both,—to the world that then is, and her inhabitants. For such inhabitants are clearly supposed: see below, and chap. xxii. 2, which verse we may quote—"And on this side of the river and on that was the tree of life . . . yielding its fruit every month; and

the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." Most certainly there will be nations on the earth at this glorious period, and there will be a true and most prosperous Church, the very Church of the seven golden candlesticks, only universal and highly purified and exalted, but whose city is just itself and itself alone, just its inhabitants and its inhabitants alone, whose walls are the impregnable walls of "salvation," whose gates are the pearly gates of "praise," and whose trees and waters of life are just that bread and water of life which came down from heaven long ago, or which may be said to come down from heaven every day and every hour, and which, without symbol, Christ and Christ alone in reality is.

(5) "*And they shall bring the glory and the honour of the nations into it: and there shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie; but only they which are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.*" All nations, all mankind, will thus act when they consecrate themselves and all that they have to the service of God and of Christ. The name of Jehovah shall be universally and gloriously exalted in all the earth. Christians now have not to move a single step, far less to cross either sea or land, in order to act according to the invitation, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Israel: and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. . . . O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord." At any time, and in any place, we may in body stand or sit still, and yet all the while and in spirit come to this very Zion, to this very Jerusalem, which is most certainly the very "New Jerusalem" here described, and to which all men, with all their glory, shall yet come, even as many are most truly now coming,—nay, to alter the conception, as they spiritually and collectively now are.

"*And there shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie.*" This would seem to imply the perfect separation of good and evil, or the perfect absence of sin, which can alone distinguish the heavenly state. Doubtless, in the highest or absolute sense of the words, this is correct. However, we may again remark that here we must sometimes take words rather in their comparative sense. In this sense they may most freely be understood of the millennial age, when the state of religion and morals shall have reached the very zenith of earthly prosperity, purity, and power. We have so far illustrated this

already. Doubtless the highest principle will be exercised in all that concerns the millennial Church, its membership, its procedure, its whole life and action. None but the good shall enter its ranks or enjoy its privileges ; but we suppose this will be due to the state of mankind, when all will be righteous and holy, rather than to any special perfection of ecclesiastical oversight or discipline. In keeping with this, we find it said, Isa. xxxv. 8, "And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called, The way of holiness ; the unclean shall not pass over it." So, as already quoted, chap. lii. 1, "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion ; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city ; for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised or the unclean." Again, chap. lx. 21, "Thy people also (shall be) all righteous." So Joel, iii. 17, "So shall ye know that I am Jehovah your God, dwelling in Zion, My holy mountain ; then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more." We need say nothing of the more absolutely perfect purity of the Church in its final and eternal state. These may suffice to show that Scripture represents such a condition of the Church of the millennial future as we find in the words before us.

"But only they which are written in the Lamb's Book of Life." Here we find the same thing expressed, and that in a most beautiful way, in the positive form. This, we need hardly add, can be said absolutely only of the perfected kingdom in heaven. Here the emblem, the New Jerusalem, is kept in view. True Christians are regarded as the only rightful citizens. This city is treated as their birthplace. This Book of Life may be called the register of spiritual births, and so of those to whom alone the rights and privileges of citizenship really belong. That book, of course, may be said to be in the hand of God or of Christ alone ; and therefore, as we found in the vision of the great day of final Judgment, it will be used in connection with the kingdom above. However, we are not therefore to suppose that in no sense, in no qualified sense, that book can be seen or read by the children of men, even on earth. In Phil. iv. 3 we find Paul affirming of certain Christians, that their "names were in the Book of Life." Nor need we suppose that he meant so to affirm by any special inspiration. Knowing their character and conduct, he drew the simple inference that they were genuine Christians, children of God, born from above ; and therefore that their names were so written. All that seems thus here meant is that all would be true Israelites, the registered children of Zion and of God.

II.

CHAPTER XXII.

1. *Vers. 1-5.* "And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street thereof, and on this side of the river and on that, was the Tree of Life, bearing twelve (manner of) fruits, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no curse any more: and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein: and His servants shall serve Him. And they shall see His face; and His name (shall be) on their foreheads. And there shall be night no more; and they need no light of lamp, neither light of sun; for the Lord God shall give them light; and they shall reign for ever and ever."

(1) "*And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.*" These five verses have been unhappily separated from the preceding chapter, to which they legitimately belong. The description of the New Jerusalem is thus most seriously injured. Here we are told of a Divine fountain of true and eternal life. From that fountain flows forth no mere stream or rivulet of living water, within the reach of a comparatively few and highly favoured sons and daughters of men. The fountain is at once infinitely precious and absolutely exhaustless, whence flows a great river, whose waters are sufficient to give life to the whole world, and that through all the ages to come. Millions have already quenched their thirst, and are now in the enjoyment of a blissful and endless life. Millions are drinking now. The whole human family will by-and-by drink and live. They cannot do so once for all. They must continue to do so for ever, if they would retain the life acquired, and enjoy all the health and strength and possess all the unfading freshness and beauty intended. The great fountain is very peculiar. No other can be compared with it. It is the throne of God and of the Lamb—not of God alone, or of the Lamb alone, but of both in one. In some sense, other or earthly thrones may be likened to it. These thrones may be called fountains,—fountains of reward and honour to the subjects, fountains of mercy to the condemned to punishment, even fountains of life to such as may have been doomed to death, fountains of prosperity and enjoyment to all through the protection of the laws and through the strength and stability of the thrones themselves.

So here. These waters are of course purely emblematic of the rich blessings of salvation, of eternal life, of all the grace and goodness which through Christ God bestows on the children of men. The throne itself is emblematic. Jehovah, the God of salvation, is in reality the Fountain of Life. Christ may be called by the same name; or He may be regarded as the channel through which the water of life flows forth from God to mankind. We repeat, all is emblematic. In truth Christ is Himself the fountain, and the river, and the streams, and the very rills, of this exhaustless and everywhere diffused unfailing restorative and everlasting support of the Divine and spiritual and heavenly life. Had the throne been that of Jehovah, the great God and Creator alone, this river would have flowed only for the holy, the unfallen, the perfectly good. It could not have flowed through the city of the redeemed or of the imperfect saints that are on earth. The Lamb must first appear in heaven, as if He had been slain, or with all the marks of sacrificial slaughter, and then take His place as worthy to sit down with His Father on His throne, or that throne had thus to become "the throne," as here said, "of God and the Lamb," before it could become the rich and glorious fountain of life to sinful and dying men. This throne is the fountain of mercy and forgiveness, of grace and goodness, of light and love, of life and liberty, of glory and honour, of eternal salvation in all its constituents, all its enjoyments and blessedness, all its hopes and prospects. We need hardly say that the waters of this vision correspond to those of the vision of Ezekiel. In the latter case they were seen to flow "from under the threshold of the temple toward the east," became wider and deeper as they proceeded, became "a river which could not be passed through," on the banks of which were very many trees on the one side and on the other, bringing forth fruit every month—"for food," and bearing leaves—"for healing." These waters flowed far beyond the precincts of the holy city, making every creature live whithersoever they flow, and entering even the Dead Sea itself and there causing all forms of life to abound. The visions relate to the same objects; but formally differ in keeping with the different times and circumstances in which they were seen. The fountain in both cases would be the same,—the one the mercy-seat sprinkled by the blood of Sacrifice, the other the throne of grace, constituted such by the great Atonement. In that of Ezekiel the waters flowed to convey very abundant life everywhere; in that of John they continue to flow throughout the whole world, and they turn spiritual death to spiritual life among all classes of people in every land. In the former, they

flowed from the high mountain on which the city stood; in the latter, they seem at first sight to flow from heaven itself, and thence alone.

However, the two cities more closely correspond. John as well as Ezekiel was carried in spirit to a very high mountain. In the one case at least the city rested upon it. It seems usual to think that, in the other, John was simply so carried that he might the more advantageously see the descent of the New Jerusalem. However, we seem to have some evidence here that this as well as the other city was made to rest on the mountain itself: for if John had been raised to so great a height, and if the city came down to some prepared basis far below, we cannot suppose any advantage for full vision at all—as, at so great a distance, he could not so well see and describe all the details which he here gives, of the throne, of the brightness of the waters, of the street of the city, of the trees on either side of the river. The mountain, then, is, as we have already suggested, “the mountain of the house, the city, of the Lord”: denoting, doubtless, the conspicuous position and the exalted glory of the spiritual community whom it beautifully represents. Thus simply emblematical, we have no such mountain to climb. As already said, we have not to move in body, spiritually to come to Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. We find it all around, always and everywhere at hand. The throne of grace may be in heaven with Jesus Christ; but it is also with Him here on earth. The vision is that of an actual and material city. All is presented in keeping with this. But we must not allow, by keeping by the letter, what was designed to suggest the very largest conceptions to deprive us of such conceptions and yield us instead the narrowest views of the grandest work of God.

The waters of life, the blessings of salvation, may be found with perfect ease. Wherever we bow the knee, there is the throne of God and of the Lamb. Wherever we open and read our Bibles, and gladly receive the precious and manifold promises of grace, there do we drink of the water of life freely. As the spirit of life in Christ Jesus dwells and works within ourselves, the waters are within, flow through our whole spiritual being, and, as Christ teaches, flow out from us, doubtless to be used by others in order to the enjoyment of the same eternal life. As the city and the people are one and the same; and as all form that city or people who are united to Christ and to God, the streams of Divine and heavenly life may be said to flow through the whole Church on earth, or

through all thus most graciously united to the very Fountain of life. To alter the figure—for all is figure—we refer to the Church as the body of Christ. Of it He is both head and heart, filling the whole with life and light, sending through the whole streams of Divine living energy, diffusing all vital and vitalising powers throughout the whole. As the Church expands and embraces the whole human family, the streams of this river of the city of God will flow throughout the whole earth, and all naturally spiritually dead shall rise to new and eternal life, and the whole world will be as indeed, and as previously said, a new heaven a new earth wherein shall dwell righteousness and peace, and in which may, as if with the natural eye, be seen the throne of God and of the Lamb. Whilst this glorious union of the renewed family of man with Christ and with God, in Christ and in God, is thus far, and through its glorious results, brought about, all so united will know and feel that the union is eternal, the new life Divine and immortal, and that they can be no less truly within the eternal kingdom while on earth than when in heaven. They will see a perfect harmony between the fact that they are successively, or from generation to generation, to reign on earth during the mystic Millennium, and the fact that they are individually as well as collectively to reign in heaven for ever and ever. In this way they will regard death as really no more. Their living union with God in Christ cannot be broken or even touched by the hand of death. Death will be seen to be rather the gate through which they, thus alive, enter their glorious and everlasting home, and also rise to a state of closer union, richer life, and perfect blessedness and glory.

(2) “*In the midst of the street of it, and of the river, on this side and on that, was the Tree of Life, bearing twelve (manner of) fruits, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*” Whatever the exact local idea, the design seems clearly to express that of freeness and accessibility to all who desire to drink of the one and to eat of the other. The heavenly food is most abundant and varied, and always at hand. Under another figure Eden, Paradise, has been restored. The serpent has been banished, the crystal stream and the tree of life are renewed—nay, all the trees of the garden have become trees of life, their fruits for food, nay, their very leaves for healing. This latter end points rather to earth than to heaven, to the millennial and imperfect Church than to the eternal and perfect kingdom. Whether we adhere to the Authorised Version, or accept the Revised, which connects the clause “in the midst/ of the street

thereof" with the preceding words, we really get the same meaning. In either case, the river flows through the street or broad space intended; whilst the trees grow on either side of the river. The picture of the city, as to this river and these trees as well as in other features, is exquisitely beautiful. But, in seeking to grasp the real meaning, we must not forget that all is figurative and enigmatical. All represents the converted family of man, the real city or real garden of Christ and of God. Their presence fills all with light and life, with food and healing, with all that can contribute to peace and joy. Heaven has indeed come down. Eden has begun to bloom. Christ, the true Tree of Life, the reality and not the mere emblem of immortality, is planted in the midst, nay, in every part of the garden, even in every heart. Every form of Divine and heavenly life is there. We might say, all is life there. God is life. Christ is life. Salvation is life. Sainthood is life. Union to God in Christ and to the common brotherhood is life. Universal and all-pervading love is life. In all, and through all, inspiring, uniting, purifying, rectifying, illuminating, sustaining all, beautifying and perfecting all, the blessed and holy and gracious Spirit of God and of Christ is emphatically life, the very spirit and power of the one continuous and endless terrestrial and celestial life of the family of God.

(3) "*And there shall be no curse any more.*" The whole world, the earth and the human race, must be viewed as, according to Scripture, under the curse of sin,—a curse which will not in all its parts be absolutely removed till the general resurrection and glorious reconstitution of all things. Still, comparatively, or to a vast extent, that curse will be so removed as to warrant the statement here made of the millennial era. In fact, the most terrible part of it has been removed long ago by Him who (Gal. iii. 13, 14) "redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that upon the nations might come the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." The curse of separation from God, and of spiritual death, nay, of separation from one another, is removed by the new birth and gift of the indwelling spirit of life in Christ Jesus, or, at least, by the work of grace thus begun, and in proportion as that work has advanced. The curse of unhappiness or misery is greatly removed in this world in the case of all enlightened and true-hearted Christians, who, "believing in Christ, whom they have not seen, rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." The curse, in all

its forms, has been removed more or less from all Christians of all ages. Yet, in no age, since apostolic times, has the mass of Christians been so enlightened even as to Christ and His salvation, or so devotedly consecrated to His service, as to enjoy the rich fruits of the true and full Christian life.

By the most of Christians the simple truth as it is in Jesus is by no means sufficiently well known. The Church still requires experimentally to know the very foundation on which it rests. We have not yet escaped the Egyptian darkness in which, for many ages, the nominally Christian Church was fearfully involved. Before all the blessedness here spoken of can possibly be enjoyed, great progress must be made, not through the direct study of Divine truth alone, but through the long-continued clear knowledge of it, and profoundly devoted attachment to it. In this way the whole constitution of the race may go on, both before and during millennial times, to rise towards its real perfection. The laws of nature may be obeyed as the express commandments of God; universal righteousness and benevolence may accomplish much; the true socialism, which can be established only by the writing of the law of mutual love in every heart, may achieve many a victory over the ills of life; the arts and sciences may do a mighty work; the sources of evil may be vastly diminished, and those of good greatly multiplied; the whole world may thus and otherwise be improved, that many a curse may be removed and many a blessing enjoyed, and, though not in the highest or absolute sense, this short but mighty saying may be realised; whilst, absolutely and for ever, it can only be so in the heavenly state.

(4) "*And the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein : and His servants shall serve Him.*" Instead of "and," we have "but" in our Authorised Version, as if implying that the removal of the curse was due to the presence of that throne; and, though this would be to no little extent true, we are not prepared to say that it was intended. This statement was implied in what was said of the source of the river. However, it sets forth a prominent fact—that of the establishment of the throne of God and of the Lamb on the earth at large by the conversion of the whole world to God. At all times, from the foundation of the Church or kingdom of Christ, that throne has been on earth, has been within that kingdom—nay, that kingdom exists wherever that throne is; and as the throne gathers around it an increasing number of willing and devoted subjects, it is the centre of an ever-widening circle on earth. Of course, so far as rightful dominion is concerned, it may be truly said to be every-

where on earth, nay, everywhere throughout the universe. So it is with the rightful throne in any country or region of the world. Still, whenever rebellion arises, the claims of the king are disputed, the throne is set aside. For the time being the throne is not there. When all rebellion is crushed, and universal obedience not only claimed but compelled, the throne is re-established and may be said to be everywhere. Here the idea evidently is that the throne is everywhere acknowledged, that all men have become willing subjects, and that loyal and loving obedience has become universal. In what sense can it be so said? Shall any real and visible throne, occupied by the personal and visible Christ, be set up in this world, to which all nations shall flock, and whence all men shall be commanded and ruled, as in the case of every earthly kingdom? Again let us remember, no material city, no geographical region, is at all intended.

This throne will be near to every one who is a faithful and loving servant and subject of God and of Jesus Christ. In reality, this throne has its place in every Christian heart, in every heart in which God in Christ reigns or is supremely loved and revered. This throne is thus in all hearts over all the world, or within the one collective community of the Christian Church. As already said, it has ever been there from the beginning. It is more and more truly there in proportion as Christians love and serve their King, or in proportion as the Bride, here set forth as a city, is true and faithful to her Lord. As the city lengthens her cords and strengthens her stakes, and continues to break forth on all sides, till she really fills the whole earth, the throne will occupy an ever-widening sphere and at last will have full dominion over all mankind. Every Christian should know of its existence on earth, if nowhere else, at least within himself. He should see it there, with the blessed God and the adorable Lamb seated on it, as truly as he sees within the same heart his nearest and dearest relatives and friends, whether on earth or in heaven, nay, as clearly and certainly as he sees the sun at midday. His whole being ought to be so consecrated to the one and only grand purpose of life, the service of God and of Christ, that to his heart and mind and will the throne of God and of the Lamb should be the most real, the most precious and the most glorious object in this or in any other world. In proportion as this is the case with others as well as himself, he will see the same throne in them, and they in him; and as it becomes the case with all, that throne will be seen in all and over all, a glorious high throne over all the earth.

This is finely brought out by what is added, "*and His servants shall serve Him.*" All hearts and minds and wills and powers and possessions shall be His. His presence shall be felt and enjoyed by all. His love shall be shed abroad in all, or diffused through all. All will seek to know the one will, to see the one light, to be moved in all things by the one all-pervading spirit of God and of the Lamb. As all love God, all will love one another. Universal peace, universal harmony, universal good, universal happiness, will be the result. We must not be supposed to mean that all this will be found in all men everywhere on earth, in all the perfection in which it will be in heaven for ever and ever. Still, we mean that it seems most clearly implied, in this entire description, and in not a few parts of Scripture, that it will be so to an extent warranting that description and all the great promises of God,—to an extent which the present state of the Church and the world, apart from the Divine testimony, would never enable us to anticipate. Without the smallest exaggeration, may we not well say, How glorious a world would this be, how exalted and noble this race of ours, if the two great commandments of supreme love to God and subordinate love to man were written on every heart or made the living and ruling principles of every man, or if all men were raised even no higher than many Christians of the present day in point of spiritual and moral character, or in the manifestation of pure, devoted, self-ruling and self-sacrificing love !

We might have said that all this might be illustrated by what we find said of another and most awful throne set up on earth from the beginning, and having unjust dominion over the mass of mankind,—the throne of Satan. It will be remembered that it was said of Pergamum,—"*where Satan's throne is.*" No one would for a moment think of a material or visible or local object. Wherever there are people yielding to the temptations of Satan or to the godless tendencies of their own hearts, there the throne of Satan is. But, it may be said, Satan is expressly said to give his throne to the beast or to Antichrist, who is a visible being and has a visible throne. Be it so. This assuredly does not imply that Christ must become visible and have an invisible throne. Who is Antichrist but a visible being who presumes to occupy the place of the invisible Christ, and who dares to set up a visible throne in the stead of the invisible throne of Christ. The royal High Priest in the midst of the symbolic candlesticks had a kingdom, and therefore a throne, long before Antichrist usurped His place as a visible head of the universal Church with a visible and local throne.

The true King is everywhere, and His throne everywhere also. The false king is in one place alone, and his throne is the same. To turn the invisible, the universal and the real into a visible, local and false centre and source of all saving power, is the satanic work of Antichrist.

(5) "*And they shall see His face.*" This will indeed be, in its highest sense, the glory and the blessedness of the Upper Sanctuary. Perhaps no expression here used more naturally suggests the idea of the eternal state than this. Still we must keep by the principle which we have kept in view throughout, that the comparative and not absolute sense of the words is to be accepted as to the Church on earth, and the absolute as to the Church in heaven; and then apply the words according as we contemplate that really one and indivisible Church under the one aspect or the other. It is certainly far from true that the face of the Invisible can be actually seen or become actually visible even in heaven. Invisibility is as truly an attribute or perfection of the blessed God as is any other attribute or perfection. He has countless ways in which He can make Himself or His presence manifest to angels and to men. When any one clearly sees any such manifestation, he may be truly said to see the face of God, whether in all the sunshine of Divine delight or in all the darkness of Divine displeasure. In this sense, His face may certainly be seen on earth as truly, though not so clearly, as in heaven. It is so seen by many now. Above all may it be clearly and delightfully seen in the face of Jesus Christ, which in a very high sense may be regarded as the face of God. How admirably has the apostle Paul said of all Christians, "We all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit," taken in connection with what he also says of "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God," or, as he says elsewhere, "who is the image of the Invisible God"!

However high all this, it still falls short of what Christ said of Himself—"He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Nor has Christ failed to reveal the very profoundest spiritual and moral law of our being with regard to this vastly important matter, that of enjoying a vision of the Invisible God, and doubtless of enjoying the very brightest and most beautiful vision of Himself: "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." In the purification and rectification of the heart all are to seek to behold the face of their God and Father. The soul of man is the created

organ of this glorious Divine vision ; and just as it rises from its impurity, its sinfulness, its selfishness, to a state, not of cold, clear, lifeless, marble purity, but of perfect, pure, unselfish, living, intensely glowing love to both God and man, or, which is essentially the same, of such love to Jesus Christ, God will be seen more and more brightly and beautifully and gloriously rising to view and remaining ever in view as the true Sun of this world, as the perfect and everlasting Light of the universe.

The words before us imply very much. We have referred chiefly to their reference to the individual Christian. We must not forget how helpful believers may be to one another. The very presence of a few eminent Christians may be of great advantage. Each increases the faith of all, and all increase the faith of each. The presence of worldly men, especially when amiable and kindly, and apparently as good as the most of Christians, is sure to affect all who know them and mingle in social fellowship with them. As Christianity advances and rises to a full tide of Divine and spiritual life, the hearts of all are made better, a purer and more heavenly atmosphere surrounds them, godliness is seen to be profitable for all things, and God Himself seems to come near and to unveil His face to them. As the inward vision grows clearer and the outward objects of it become more Christlike and more Godlike, the heart, as if with many loving eyes, beholds God everywhere, and in all these more or less numerous living and loving images of Christ and of God. How greatly is the faith of many weakened and the spirits of many beclouded by the endless arguments presented, and mental perplexity awakened, by the sceptical and even atheistical, who are lost in the mazes of error themselves, and who lead many minds into a state of difficulty and doubt ! The Christian religion has thus had to be upheld and defended from age to age. It has to be so yet ; and, for a long time to come, it may have to be so.

However, Christians are now disposed more than ever to trust to Christ Himself to uphold His own cause, to defend Himself and His own truth by simply revealing Himself to mankind, by simply unveiling His ineffably beautiful and glorious face, and thus showing to men that He is no mere man, like themselves, but the very brightness and glory of the Invisible God. We still greatly need to accept as infallibly true His simple and sure declaration : " And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." Christians will thus rise above the influence of mere logical proofs and arguments, and be satisfied with nothing short of intuitive certainty

—the certainty which, however helped by such evidence, will rest finally and perfectly on the clear vision and undoubted presence of Christ and of God. As the race advances, as the evils of the world are removed, as holiness and happiness everywhere abound, as harmony becomes visible among all classes and all nations, as earth seems to rise to heaven or heaven seems to come down to earth, and as all hearts are prepared warmly and joyously to appreciate the evidently God-created or new-created world, His face will be seen by all, every son of man will appear a son of God, and God Himself will be seen to be all in all.

(6) "*And His name shall be on their foreheads.*" This is just the fact to which we have referred. The name of God is on the forehead of every child of God; but it may not always appear, or be easily deciphered. The name of every father may be said to be on the foreheads of his children, even when they are very young. This may be so; but not till they grow up, or till their likeness to him becomes more real and more visible, can the name with any certainty be read. So it is with the children of the Most High: only as the likeness appears can the name be read. The likeness may be most marked, and yet be thoroughly unseen by men who know not God. The Father must be known before the likeness of the Son can possibly be seen. But, in these predicted and promised millennial times, the likeness will have become clear and unmistakable, and all eyes will have sufficient power of vision fully to behold it. Some Christians have given and do give infallible proof of their Divine and heavenly origin by the spirit which they breathe and the whole life which they lead, and not a few have seen in them the image of the invisible God. Among all the saints or saintly men who have ever lived, there is one whose face rises in Divine beauty and glory above that of every other of the children of men; and it is good for us and for all to seek to resemble the apostles in this, that we can say with them, "And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." When we see so many human beings so far from like God as to appear no sons of His at all, let us be glad that thus we can at all times turn to this one peerless Face, and see in it the face of the Son of God, and through it the very face of God Himself.

(7) "*And there shall be night no more; and they need no light of lamp, neither light of sun: for the Lord God shall give them light.*" These words, with those which immediately precede, though true of the millennial age, seem to raise our thoughts still higher, and, as the picture is completed, to make us

feel that the eternal heaven as well as the new earth is here. The light and glory of earth and heaven seem to mingle and blend together. We are led to think not merely of the wondrous blessedness of this world of ours during many a long century, perhaps many a long millennium, but of the perfect and inconceivable blessedness of that world where God appears in His richest glory and highest manifestation, where Christ is visible, surrounded by His visible and perfected kingdom, and holy angels join with redeemed men in celebrating the highest praises of the First and the Last, the great Creator and blessed Redeemer, the dazzling glories of the infinite grace and goodness of Jehovah and of Jesus Christ. The glorious and perfect light will be no mere light of knowledge: it will be the light which banishes all sadness and all sorrow, the light which creates all gladness and joy. There will be no cloud on the pure ethereal sky. No mist of darkness shall conceal the most distant object or fall upon one single purified eye. Far less shall any veil ever conceal the person of the beloved Son or the face of the loving Father. The lights of earth shall have ceased to shine. Sun, moon, and stars shall have been eclipsed. The glories of creation shall have been outshone by the glories of God's highest and holiest work, the mediatorial work of Christ, the redemptive work of mankind. "Jehovah in Jesus shall be the Everlasting Light, and the days of all mourning and sorrow shall be ended."

We need hardly say that, by taking the symbol for the reality here, many have been led to give what may have been deemed sublime views of the heavenly world, and to speculate most wonderfully as to the glorious results of the literal abolition of all natural darkness or of all natural night. They forget that, not only to the astronomer, but to all saintly souls like that of the Psalmist, night may be called day, and day, night: "When I consider Thy heavens . . . the moon and the stars . . . what is man . . . ?" Why, the cloudless night is the brightest day of the most magnificent natural revelation of God! Let us not speculate about the constitution of the heavenly and eternal world, of which we simply know nothing, and need not be so foolish as to try to know anything. The Light which banishes all night and creates eternal day is the light of no material or created sun, but, as we are here expressly told, the Light of God and of the Lamb,—Light Divine, spiritual, eternal.

(8) "*And they shall reign for ever and ever.*" Glorious end of all things to the sons and servants of God. The same persons are referred to as in chapter xx., but who are there said to reign

a thousand years. As we have fully brought out, they live and reign in succession, and as the one triumphant Church of God on earth, and after the fall of the false Church which had so long usurped her place and persecuted her almost to the very death. Only in succession, and individually for but a short period, though collectively for the long millennial age, did they reign on earth. All were alive from the dead, all were in living union with Christ and God, all thus possessed from the first eternal life,—all, bodily on earth, really lived in heaven,—all, in passing out of the body, successively passed from earth to heaven,—all in reality began to reign in heaven when they were raised in heart and soul and life to Christ and God in heaven, as if they came down for a season and returned when the end of their earthly career was served. Thus, when the millennium and the short season which followed the long succession came to a close, the number of the redeemed was complete, the family of God and kingdom of Christ had reached its divinely appointed extent, and those who had reigned with Christ on earth during the whole period of the Church's existence now began to reign individually, as well as collectively, with Christ and God in glory and blessedness for ever and ever.

All the servants of God are thus kings. They are all raised to royal estate. At last they will wear crowns of glory which shall never fade away. The last of the successive generations of these royal sons and servants will, as we are elsewhere taught, be all changed as in a moment, and, in the twinkling of an eye, put off their mortal garments and be clothed in the robes of immortality, whilst all who have, during all these ages, gone before them, put on the like incorruptible bodies; and thus, when the entire work of redemption is completed, the whole countless multitude of the Church of the firstborn shall be constituted into that glorious and eternal kingdom which the Son shall deliver up to the Father, that, whilst He still continues to be the Saviour-King, "God shall be all in all." Glorious vision! Glorious prospect! Glorious and blessed kingdom! Happy they who form a part of it! The glory and the blessedness seem so great, that faith trembles as she foresees, yet fails not to "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." If faith looked simply on the recipients themselves, her strength might fail her. But the Eternal God Himself becomes her refuge and her support; He teaches her to look to Him and to Christ Jesus, and to remember how the very glory of both is involved in the unfading glory and blessedness of that very kingdom: for without the eternal kingdom Christ could not wear an incorruptible crown, and God could not

have a complete and immortal family,—the infinitely precious treasure of His Divine and Fatherly heart.

2. *Vers. 6-9.* “And he said unto me, These words are faithful and true : and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show unto His servants the things which must shortly come to pass. And behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this Book. And I John am he that heard and saw these things. And when I heard I saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things. And he saith unto me, See thou do it not : I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren the prophets, and with them which keep the words of this book : worship God.”

(1) “*And he said unto me, These words are faithful and true.*” And they are as fitly introduced as true. They come to the help of that faith which might well waver under the dazzling power of so glorious a vision. It is well to be told, as if directly from heaven and from God, that all is real, all true, all the words of the Faithful and True Witness, who can neither be possibly deceived nor possibly deceive. God’s plans and purposes so far transcend the compass of our own minds that we find it hard to anticipate so glorious a future. Well has Jehovah said, by way of encouraging those who tremble at His word, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.” The same words we found introduced after the first and more general description of this vision. These practical statements, thus at the close of each description, are to be regarded as one connected or at least successive whole. This leads us to look upon them as indicating the unity of both descriptions. After the first, we found a most precious promise of the water of life to all who are athirst ; and, after this, we shall find a clear and most urgent call to come and most freely drink of the same living water.

(2) “*And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show unto His servants the things which must shortly come to pass.*” We may take these as the words, not of the angel, but of God or of Christ, who, seemingly, immediately adds, “Behold, I come quickly.” The design seems to be to set forth this prophecy as coming from the same Source and with the same authority as the writings of the prophets of ancient times, whose spirits were influenced and guided by Him who is the God of all. This is in keeping with what was affirmed in chap. i. 1 :

undoubtedly intended for emphasis and lasting impression. We have found that the millennial period is very long. However, what is great to us is small to God. What is the longest period to which the history of the race can possibly be stretched, when compared with the eternity which will follow? To every one who reads, some part or other of the prophecy is sure to be at hand.

(3) "*And behold, I come quickly.*" How often has Christ uttered this awakening expression! By no means too often. Would that the words penetrated every heart, and led all so to act as to be ever ready! We do not suppose that He here, any more than on at least some other occasions, alludes to His final coming. His words are always most suitable to all: for no day or hour passes in which He does not come to many, whether they are prepared for His coming or not. As already said, Jesus is the ever-coming One, who comes at last.

(4) "*Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this Book.*" Virtually the same was said at the beginning, and it is worthy of repetition at the end of it. No one can possibly so keep them, without finding this statement perfectly true. No one can do so without being assured of the truth and Divine origin of the Book itself. Nor can any one imbibe the spirit of it, act according to its precepts, or accept its gracious and glorious disclosures, without priceless benefit. This Book, in fact, is a condensed summary of the entire Scriptures; and he whose heart and life are fully influenced by it cannot fail to enjoy a large share of the influence of them.

(5) "*And I John am he that heard and saw all these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things.*" John testifies to the fact that he had been Divinely favoured to see and hear all that he had recorded in this Book; and then tells how he was about to worship the angel who showed all to him. It seems strange that he should have been led to do so a second time. We may suppose his mind to have been so occupied with what he saw and heard, so brought into a state of rapture, so raised above all thought of self and all power of self-control, that, when the like impulse came, the like effect followed. So far he was as if in a dream. In both cases, when the feeling of being Divinely inspired, or of having received a direct Divine revelation, was followed with a powerful emotion of gratitude, he may have had the thought virtually forced upon him that, under this angelic form, he saw Jehovah or the Lord Jesus; and thus he could not but wonder and worship.

(6) "*And he saith unto me, See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren the prophets, and with them that keep the words of this book: worship God.*" Perhaps this second faithful record of the error of John was intended for special and lasting profit. The tendency to worship the creature has been very strong and of tremendous evil influence. In fact, the tendencies to the extremes of superstition and atheism,—to all-belief and no-belief,—have been and are most powerful factors in the history of the religious life of mankind. Divine revelation alone has enabled men to avoid both fearful extremes, and to keep on the true path, the true *via media*, which leads to right living and real happiness in this world, and to perfect holiness and blessedness in union with Christ and communion with God in heaven. Hence the emphatic "*worship God.*" Worship no other. Let no man worship any man. Nay, let no man worship even the brightest angel or loftiest creature in the universe. This tells of the created dignity of all mankind, of the very poorest and most obscure of the children of men. They are made by the same hand that made the angels of light, and that for the same glorious purpose, the grandest of all purposes—that of knowing, loving, worshipping and serving God, and God alone. The angel assigns an all-sufficient reason in keeping with this: "*I am a fellow-servant with thee,*" implying, "Thou art a fellow-servant with me." All, angels and men, are sons and subjects and servants of the same Divine Father, and King, and Lord. The same creative glory rests on all. The inferior order of beings reflects the higher glory of redemption. All Christians are made glorious in Christ Jesus, "called by the God of all grace unto His eternal glory *in* Christ Jesus."

3. *Vers. 10-15.* "And he saith unto me, Seal not up the words of the prophecy of this Book; for the time is at hand. He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still: and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him do righteousness still: and he that is holy, let him be made holy still. Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right (to come) to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city. Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie."

(1) "*And he saith unto me, Seal not up the words of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand.*" At first sight

this would seem to imply that the end of time was near. However, we should remember that the words were addressed to John at the close of the final communication of the contents of this Book, which is not to be supposed long after the time of the first. To all intents the statements made here are to be viewed as a mere addition to those made concerning the Book at the beginning. John had now received the whole prophecy, and he is told not to seal it up as if it belonged to a far-off age alone. We have here virtually a repetition of chap. i. 3, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things which are written therein: for the time is at hand." In both cases the whole Book is referred to. It is to be kept open for all people and in all ages, to all of whom, as reading or hearing, "the time will always be at hand." To all of them Jesus is ever saying, "Behold, I come quickly"; and His words are true to all without exception, and not to that one and only generation to whom He shall finally and visibly come, as so very many mistakenly hold. All the words of Christ, wherever recorded, are to be read in every age or throughout the whole course of time, and as if personally addressed to the individual readers or hearers, to whom He will certainly and unexceptionally come, and that suddenly or quickly to call them to account; and, even before the final and general Judgment, to render to them, at least after a general manner, according to their lives.

(2) "*He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still: and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him do righteousness still: and he that is holy, let him be made holy still.*" By way of awful warning on the one hand, and of greatest encouragement on the other, these words seem to express a great and irreversible law at once of human nature and of Divine judgment,—the law of the permanency of character as the result of habitual conduct, whether evil or good, and as ordained or permitted by Divine decree. Those who continue to live in an unrighteous or unholy course will remain unrighteous or unholy; while those who pursue a course of righteousness and holiness will remain righteous and holy. Just as a man lives and dies, so shall he afterwards be. To all intents, the same great and irreversible law is laid down in Gal. vi. 7, 8: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life."

(3) "*Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me*

to render to each man according as his work is." We have above said that this is true at all times and to all persons. When He comes at the close of any or of every life, He may be justly said to bring His reward with Him. Then will He appoint the man, whom He thus calls to his account, a place corresponding to his character, whether good or bad. This may be viewed as implying no more than a general judgment. Only when all men are finally judged, and the real nature and consequences of good or evil deeds are fully seen, we may suppose the real and individual reward or punishment to be apportioned. Still, the whole reward may be said to come with Christ, though it may not thus actually and definitely be given.

(4) *"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Blessed are they that wash their robes"* (or, A.V., *"that do His commandments"*), *"that they may have the right (to come) to the Tree of Life, and may enter in by the gates into the city. Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie."*

These solemn words appear to be those of Jesus, implying that He claims to be absolutely Divine, Jehovah, the great I AM. He thus introduces Himself, in all the majesty of his Divinity, in order to seal the truth of what goes before and of what is immediately added. He clearly lays down the law by which rightful entrance can be obtained to the true kingdom of heaven, or to the Holy City, the New Jerusalem. So far as the real test of rightful admission is concerned, or, we may add, rightful continued enjoyment is secured, both versions are really equivalent; for he who continues to wash his robes is just he who will continue to keep the commandments of Christ; and he who would keep these commandments must continue to wash his robes.

We may accept the text of the Revisers—"Blessed are they that wash their robes." They only who are loosed from their sins by the blood of Christ can enter at all; and they only, as here said, "who wash their robes," or continue to wash them, can possess the rights of perpetual citizenship. All this is simple: only Christians can enter the kingdom; only those who continue Christian can remain within the kingdom. Let it be observed that, here, we have the present tense, "wash," not the past, "washed," as in chap. vii. 14, where the final state is referred to, where they had ceased to wash, because they had entirely ceased to sin. Here, however, they must continue to wash, because they have not reached the final or

eternal state of sinless perfection. This one expression clearly fully demonstrates that the city referred to is yet on earth, or is the Church still on earth. People may enter any mere outward community without either the forgiveness of sin or the regeneration of the heart. But, Christ Himself being judge, "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." Having rightly entered, and continuing to obey, and, when in any way coming short, repenting and obtaining forgiveness through "the precious blood of the Lamb," he remains entitled to enjoy all the rights and privileges of heavenly citizenship, or, as here figuratively represented, "the right to the tree of life and to enter in by the gates into the city." Nor will this right ever fail. Death cannot terminate or affect it. All within the pearly gates on earth, if removed hence, will find themselves within the same gates in the heavenly world. Like those of the seventh chapter, they will then have ceased to wash, because they will have ceased to sin. "They will go no more out." "The Lamb will feed them." In the highest sense, "God will wipe all tears from their eyes." Blessed all such indeed! How desirable to be among the true followers of Christ, the true sons of God, the true citizens of the New Jerusalem on earth! How well may all such persevere in the true way of salvation! How sad all those here spoken of as without! How fearful the catalogue here given of them! They are all the natural and un-renewed, all the impenitent and unsaved among men. The grossest deeds are ascribed to them. But the mere outward form of life is by no means meant. They are described as what they are in heart as well as action, what they are in the sight of God as well as in that of man. They are described as what, unless for outward checks, the very best of the un-renewed would become. They are just those who are in the flesh, who walk in the flesh, who do the works of the flesh, who are all flesh and nothing but flesh, and that, not because they could not be saved or were simply overlooked by the grace and mercy of God, but because they would not be saved, or continued to reject the Blessed Saviour and to resist the Holy Spirit. How sad! Yet so it is. Would that all would ponder, and resolve, and obey the most gracious and urgent invitation which follows,—*"Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely!"*

4. *Vers. 16-21.* "I Jesus have sent Mine angel to testify unto you these things for the Churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the morning Star. And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And he that heareth, let him say, Come. And he that is athirst, let him

come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely. I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this Book, If any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this Book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the Book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and (from) the holy city, and from the things which are written in this Book. He which testifieth these things saith, Yea: I come quickly. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with the saints. Amen."

(1) "*I Jesus have sent Mine angel to testify unto you these things for the Churches.*"

The Book of the wonderful Apocalypse is now completed. Jesus here most solemnly acknowledges the real authorship. He sent His angel to testify what it contains to the Churches with respect to the Churches. All was intended for all Christians and Christian Churches from the time of John to the end of the world. This Book is for all time. It will suit every age, every crisis, the state and character of every man who reads. Here, after many centuries, it is in the hands of millions, and doubtless will remain so to the final coming of Jesus Christ. All, who read and make proper use of it, will be prepared to testify that they have found it a most precious boon from heaven, and of unspeakable value to them on earth. The testimony of Jesus is absolutely true.

(2) "*I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the morning Star.*" Jesus would commend His own testimony, and command the faith and faithfulness of all. He seems here to claim to be all that all the prophets predicted, and that God, through them, testified concerning Him. He is the all in all of all the Scriptures of God. As He said, "They are they which testify of me." He apparently alludes directly to Isaiah xi., the great millennial prophecy, in which He is set forth as the promised Son of David, the true Divine and human King of the true Israel of God: "And there shall come forth a Shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a Branch out of his roots shall bear fruit: and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding. . . . And righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins. And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. . . . They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain. For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. And it shall

come to pass in that day, that the Root of Jesse, which standeth for an ensign of the peoples, unto Him shall the nations seek; and His resting place shall be glorious." But this is not all: "I am the bright, the morning Star." So He testifies of Himself. All who see Him know that this testimony is infallibly true. Christ is indeed the one and only Star of hope to mankind, the Star which ushers in the eternal day, the Star destined to shine as a glorious and unsetting sun in heaven. "*I am the bright, the morning Star.*" How bright! how beautiful! How sweet and sacred, as it continues to shine on the brow of this dark world's night, and tells silently and surely of the coming of the endless day!

(3) "*And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And he that heareth, let him say, Come. And he that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take of the water of life freely.*" As already said, this is the last, the freest, the most cordial gospel invitation to be found in the whole Bible. It may, in the first instance, be regarded as that of Christ Himself. It follows the words in which He so simply and sublimely describes Himself as the Saviour-King of Israel, and the very Star of hope for a glorious immortality. We may thus view Him as adding to this encouraging self-description the words of the invitation,—"*And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come*"; they do so in My name or according to My commission.

"*The Spirit says, Come*"; "come and take of the water of life freely." This Spirit is elsewhere represented as "sent forth to all the earth." He is the great Divine agent by whom the world is led to Christ and to salvation, or to drink freely of the waters, or to take freely of the blessings, of eternal salvation. This Spirit works in all and by means of all. All Divine agencies are of His inspiration and under His control. He dwells in all who collectively form the Bride of Christ, and He uses all for the saving good of mankind.

"*The Bride says, Come*,"—the Bride above described as the Holy City, the New Jerusalem which comes down out of heaven, therefore the Church on earth, the Church of all ages, emphatically of the millennial ages, when she shall rise to highest excellence and richest beauty, and when she shall so effectually invite that all men shall obey, and drink and live for ever. This cannot be the Bride in her celestial perfection: for her work will not then be to call all men to Christ for salvation. Nor can we suppose the Bride here alluded to to be the community of all departed saints literally raised from the

dead. Nowhere in Scripture do we read of saints clothed in the garb of immortality sent forth to call sinners to repentance and eternal life. The invitation is for every age and for all men; and this infallibly implies that the Bride is none other than the Church of Christ of every age and country,—the Church of the time of John, of the present day, and of all future times. The Bride calls and seeks to persuade all men by the use of all her resources, by means of all her ministry, by her very presence, by the spirit which she breathes, by her very beauty, which more or less attracts according as it is real and rich, and evidently heavenly and Divine. "*The Spirit and the Bride say, Come,*" as if with one voice, as if They were one. Just in proportion as the Spirit dwells in the Church, shines through the Church, and works by the Church, does this invitation go forth and influence the minds and hearts of men.

"*And he that heareth, let him say, Come.*" This clearly proves the whole invitation to be that of Christ. No other could give this commission. It has been, for centuries, sadly, almost entirely, neglected. Before His ascension Jesus gave His great commission to preach the gospel to the whole world. Though given to the apostles, it seems intended for all disciples, and was so understood that all seem to have acted accordingly—at least, we are so informed with respect to those scattered abroad through persecution. Whether apostles were alone present when the great commission was given, or whether any doubt may be cast upon the extent of that commission or not, we have abundant evidence that from the first all Christians believed themselves bound to convey the glad tidings everywhere. What we may call the universal apostolic or missionary commission here unmistakably given, and that from the very throne of Jesus Christ—the last commission given by Him—is quite in keeping with the history of the early Church, addressed to every Christian without exception, and may be said to put into the hand of every follower of Christ a direct order from the hand of Christ to preach the gospel to every creature, to do all in his power to persuade men to come to the Saviour and to receive the great and the free salvation. Here we find "the Bishop of souls," the Bishop of bishops, the one and only true Archbishop, putting His sacred, authoritative and almighty hand on the head of every true disciple, and ordaining him to be a witness to his fellow-men, and a preacher of the everlasting gospel which he has himself heard, received, and found to be from God, for his everlasting good and for that of all who receive it. So long as Christians acted accordingly, the Church prospered, and went on, under her royal Leader, "conquering and

to conquer." All this is perfectly consistent with what is certainly true—that men were regularly set apart as evangelists, whose part it was to devote themselves fully to the work of preaching the gospel from place to place; and when churches, however small, were formed, two sets of office-bearers, bishops and deacons, with the common name of presbyters or elders, were duly appointed over them. This, however, was not meant to limit the duty and privilege of every Christian to testify for Christ and preach the gospel as he had the power and the opportunity. Here, in the age of John, or before the apostolic times had come to a close, Christ expressly declares it to be the duty of all who know the gospel to make it known. Gradually this duty has been practically denied. The office-bearers of the Church gradually undertook to be the great and only dispensers of the Word of Life. Gradually the Christian people were reduced to silence, and the office-bearers were alone ordained to preach. Gradually the people became simply *ὁ λαός*, *the people*, and the office-bearers *ὁ κλήρος*, *the clergy*, *the Church*. The results have been tremendously disastrous. Christians are happily so far convinced of this. They now act more freely and more in keeping with the universal commission than ever since apostolic times. Still it is comparatively but rarely obeyed. The conquering army we found represented by the crowned Monarch on the white horse, followed with all His soldiers, in white linen, or clad in armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, and thus soon subduing all their foes. Let all that army of the present day, and of after times, obey this express, direct and unexceptional commission of the great Captain Himself, and the Church will everywhere prosper, and the world be soon converted to Christ and to God. "HE THAT HEARETH, LET HIM SAY, COME."

"*And he that is athirst, let him come.*" We have already found that "He that sitteth on the throne," whilst saying "Behold, I make all things new," utters the words of most precious promise, "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely": and now here Christ calls on the thirsty soul to come and thus take of that water freely. How pleasant to find that all this is in harmony with the grand invitation of the Evangelical Prophet, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price,"—showing the same spirit pervading as well the Old Testament Scriptures as the New, illustrating the unity and harmony of the whole Book, and pointing to the fact that from the very beginning the same salvation has

been preached as the pure and free gift of God; to be received most freely,—if bought, to be bought "*without money and without price.*"

"*He that will, let him take of the water of life freely.*" What more could possibly be said? What could more clearly declare that the gospel is for all, salvation for all; and that none need remain a single moment without it? All who will may take. Only neglect or refusal can stand in the way of the possession of all the rich blessings of eternal life. "He that will" is another way of saying "every man." All classes of men are thus addressed, and that directly by Jesus Christ Himself. No room is left for exception, for difficulty, or for excuse. All may call Him their own, *if they will*. All may enjoy eternal life, *if they will*. All may go to heaven, *if they will*. All may be crowned with eternal glory and blessedness, *if they will*. All may be for ever and ever with God and with Christ, and with the redeemed and with the angels of light, *if they will*. How sad—how sad, then, if any fail of all this glorious and endless grace, because, simply and solely, *they will not!*

(4) "*I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this Book, If any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this Book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the Book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and (from) the Holy City, and from the things which are written in this Book.*" Here we have a most solemn and faithful warning for all time, and for every man who has this Book, or the whole Bible of which it is in reality the sum, against all tampering with Divine revelation, or trifling with the precious truth of God or of Christ or of salvation which it makes known. The man who does so can have no true veneration for God or Christ, and so can have never truly accepted the free and the precious invitation of grace here and elsewhere recorded, and can, in fact, have no real title to eternal life, or cannot really have that life dwelling in him. He is thus declared to be among the impenitent. Of course, that cannot mean that the man who may have once, or even long, so sinfully done, cannot possibly be saved. Let him only repent, let him only become athirst, let him only *will*, and he certainly is here expressly warranted, nay, most urgently pressed, "*to take of the water of life freely.*" We may simply add, Can we believe it possible for any one to write so wonderful a Book as this, a Book so absolutely opposed to all falsehood and all moral evil, and yet, unless truly and Divinely

inspired, so to magnify this Book as to make it a test of the eternal destiny of all who read it?

(5) "*He which testifieth these things saith, yea: I come quickly.*" Once more, Jesus, as if with trumpet tone, calls aloud, "YEA, I COME QUICKLY." All need to listen to the mighty Voice. Yea, most assuredly He comes quickly to every man on earth. He makes no exception. Here we must remember the time when He thus spoke was the time of the apostle John. Thus He spoke to all. He has continued so to speak to every man who has read this Book ever since. Some would deem His words but light, if they refer to the death of every man, in comparison of their weight if taken to refer to the personal and visible coming of Christ Himself. This is more than a mistake: it is a most grievous error. Every man who reads knows for certain that Christ may come to him personally, may call him at any moment, and require of him a faithful account of his past life and of his treatment of his God and Saviour; whilst no man can so know of the actual coming of Christ in his day or for a long time to come. If men ever kept in mind the certainty of Christ's coming to them personally, and that possibly at any moment, they would need no further belief beyond that of His certain and most glorious appearing in the end for universal Judgment, in order to keep them on their watch-tower, or to lead them to act according to the counsel of Christ,—“Be ye also ready; for, in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh.”

(6) "*Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.*" John sincerely and profoundly acquiesces,—“Amen: so be it.” The whole heart of the aged, the loving and beloved disciple, assuredly went forth with this solemn Amen. But, doubtless, he thought chiefly of himself and of the coming of Christ to and for himself. After writing this Book, and after receiving such a revelation of a long future as this Book contains, he could not possibly believe that the second coming of Christ was or could be at hand. He speaks, therefore, of himself and for himself, and of and for every true-hearted and loving disciple like himself. He stands, as it were, with upraised hands, gazing up into heaven, as long before he and others had done when Christ ascended to His throne; and, perhaps repeating again and again, Amen, amen, he adds, “Come, Lord Jesus.” So should it be with every Christian to the end of time. All love His appearing. All may well long for His coming. Yet, none should will it, till the precious work on earth is done. To save a single soul is worth one's waiting on earth and away from heaven for many a year. How noble the spirit of Paul when in “a strait” as to his departure! Would that all

sought thus to be! What a testimony for Christ! What blessedness for the Christian! What a Divine prospect! What glory and blessedness soon to be actually enjoyed! Whilst doing all to work for mankind, to serve the Lord, to prepare for heaven, all should seek, like John, to listen to the Voice from heaven, "Behold, I come quickly," and to say with him, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus."

(7) "*The grace of the Lord Jesus be with the saints. Amen.*" So uttered the heart of John; and so repeats the heart of every Christian. That grace is all-sufficient to lead to glory. May all enjoy it. All is grace from end to end. When redemption is complete, all will adore the glory of the grace of God.

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